

A STATE OF ENGLAND

Anthony Hartley

England today, in Anthony Hartley's view, is suffering from a widespread social malaise that shows itself in a sense of frustration, irritability, and a tendency toward provincialism. As evidence, he cites the utterances and opinions of English intellectuals; he makes a telling case, and since he names names and pulls no punches, his analysis makes lively reading.

As causes of England's ailment he cites: the decline of Britain as a world power and the inability of British leaders and intellectuals to be reconciled to it; Britain's straitened economic situation since the war; disappointment with the Welfare State, which, as might have been expected, turns out not to be Utopia after all.

The remedies are not easy, but Mr. Hartley describes the general forms they should take. England must join Europe, in order not only to preserve and improve its economic well-being but also to find scope and outlet for those qualities that have made Britain great in the past. Otherwise it may become truly insular and even chauvinistic. At home the great task is to raise the level of culture sharply. This can be done only by means of education of a high quality and strict standards.

Mr. Hartley has written a stimulating book, much of which has arresting relevance to the problems of American democracy and our own burgeoning welfare state.

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DLG 1963

Anthony Hartley

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In memoriam R.F.H.

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A.H.

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GENESIS OF A BOOK

It is no very good symptom either of nations or individuals that they deal much in vaticination.

CARLYLE

To write about one's own country is not an activity that should require preliminary excuses. It is, indeed, the duty of any writer worthy of his salt to say what he has to say about the society in which he lives. It is part of what he owes to the community into which he was born, and the greater the honesty of his utterance the higher the proportion of the debt acquitted. But that honesty can never be absolute. He is necessarily condemned to the relativity of his own outlook in a world which he affects and which affects him in return, stirring his emotions and clouding his judgement. There is no fulcrum here from which to move the earth. There is nothing in his favour save a little goodwill and the capacity of the human mind to transcend itself by the smallest of conceivable measures, to go a hair's breadth beyond what can reasonably be expected of it. So that certain writers have arrived at a startling and prophetic objectivity about their own time and place. It is encouraging (and also heart-breaking) for an English writer to regard the long line of great men who have spoken out about the 'condition of England question'. From Burke through Coleridge and Carlyle to Matthew Arnold and Bagehot there is a continuous procession of strong minds who have pondered the questions that will occupy me in the course of this book. I have felt their sustaining energy from the past and I have felt most acutely the lack of comparable guidance in the present. The line of what I would call 'sages' continues up to George Orwell. Then, despite our contemporary flow of magazines, pamphlets and books, there is a blank, and, for all the perceptiveness of some contemporary writers, there is nobody to astonish

us by his immediate comprehension of England's dilemmas or to carry us away by the zeal with which his solutions are proposed. Perhaps the mantle has passed to America, where Tiresias and Cassandra can rave thinly disguised as sociologists, literary critics and psychoanalysts. For myself I can honestly say that no contemporary writer has aided me in that clarification of my own thought which was necessary to produce this book as much as Matthew Arnold. His analysis of English society, those qualities it possesses and those it lacks, seems to me profound and as valid today as when he wrote it. If his name occurs frequently in the following pages it is the sign of a real debt and a real discovery.

No doubt there will be some to agree with Carlyle that vaticination is best left alone. But I do not believe that, and it was something of an impertinence for Carlyle of all people to assert it. If there were nothing to say about England at the present time how happy we all should be. Unfortunately there is a great deal to say, and my opinion that much of it is not being said must stand as my main reason for trying to express it myself. Of course, I also have ideas and prejudices of my own, which I wish to put down on paper—possibly as the result of an incurable taste for moralizing. They may not be very profound ideas. They may, in fact, consist more of prejudice than I would like to think. But the mixture is my own, and, after all, nobody is obliged to read it.

That I should have chosen this particular moment to write a book on this subject is probably not accidental. Certainly at the present time there seems an especial need for some sort of debate about the direction which England is taking and about the choices still open to it. The early 1960s have all the air of being a watershed in our history. Two great movements of reform have now reached their zenith and appear likely to be of diminishing importance in the foreseeable future. These are the establishment of the Welfare State society at home and the liquidation of the British colonial empire abroad. For, though old-age pensions and national assistance may not be adequate, though there may still be too many slums and not enough schools, the desirability of stopping these gaps in the Welfare State is generally admitted, and, where reform is a question of priorities, its execution will hardly be long delayed. The maintenance and extension of the British Welfare State depends on continued prosperity, but, given that considerable pre-condition, it is bound to settle down into the kind of more or less well-administered service that we

expect from Whitehall and the local authorities. This is the end of an old, good, humanitarian song. As for the process of forming colonies into self-governing states, it has gone so far that the liberal who supported the South Africa Act in 1909 can now object passionately to it on the grounds of the use white South Africans have made of it. Here again a long process of reform is coming to an end, and, though there may yet be errors and difficulties, a transfer of power to which both of our main political parties are committed will probably be complete in a few years' time. And if on the way there is muddle and catastrophe, the resulting imbroglio will have to be settled at the conference tables of the world rather than at Westminster.

Thus, the two considerable movements of humanitarian reform which have dominated English political life since before the First World War are now nearing their end, leaving behind them scraps of programmes and fragments of idealism, a movement of penal reform here and a protest against *apartheid* there, to occupy the time and energies of reformers. And, since political parties require something more than the remnants of a programme if they are to survive, this process has been accompanied by frustration and, more recently, by convulsion in the party of reform. Between 1959 and 1962 the groping for direction of the Labour Party has frequently taken on something of the sharp flurry of desperation which the drowning man creates around him. Or perhaps these flounderings should rather be compared to those undergone by a good swimmer suddenly forced to exercise his skill in some element other than water—say, treacle. In fact, Britain is on the point of terminating a long and painful liquidation of the decaying assets and the all too tangible debts left to us from the nineteenth century, and this naturally implies a painful reorientation for all those whose efforts have been devoted to speeding the reckoning. No doubt, too, we have still much to do and far more to pay in the way of reparations for the misdeeds of nineteenth-century colonialism and industrialism, but the ordering of these particular rooms in the house is already far advanced. In 1963 it is time to ask: 'What next?'

It is, indeed, high time. For our achievements (very real achievements, I believe) have created their own problems to add to those we have inherited. And many of us, of course, would like the achievements without paying the price; to want to eat one's cake and have it is a normal human emotion. But when I look at much of what is written

today I find it difficult not to be disturbed by the numbers of those who would solve this dilemma by pretending that the cake is there and cutting large slices of air with evident relish. The New Left would replace the missing garments of the Labour Party with Emperor's new clothes tailored in St. Germain des Prés. Both right and left join hands unexpectedly in deploring a materialistic and undignified outbreak of happiness among the working classes. And there are still voices raised to rally us to an imperial ideal as mythical and monstrous as anything that ever came out of Loch Ness or off the rotary presses of the *Daily Express*. But the only reactionary conspiracy is the universal conspiracy of history, and the only law of progress that which forbids attempts to turn back the hands of the clock.

Therefore, it seems to me that there is room for a look at some of our present discontents by someone whose main title of competence is that he cares about them. And, since inevitably I must view events around me from the standpoint of my own position as a writer, my evidence as to the present state of England will be drawn from a restricted, though not necessarily unrepresentative, circle of witnesses, from intellectuals, and, in the main, intellectuals who have expressed their ideas in writing. In fact, it would be ridiculous to adopt any other method in a book which, if it deals with anything, deals with the history of ideas. Short of conducting a Gallup poll, all that is possible for the observer of his own time is to follow the hints and intuitions afforded him by his own experience. This is a book about the intellectual climate of England in the 1960s, but, since our new impetus will come from that shifting sky, if it is to come at all, this effort to understand the world may confound Marx's anti-thesis by proving to be far too ambitious an attempt to change it. If so, I must ask my readers' indulgence. Most schemes of political improvement are very laughable things, but I fancy that our merriment has a tired note about it by this time.

I have wished, if not to found a system, then to make a contribution to a debate. To that extent I shall have written a polemic, but I do not think it of much importance to avoid being confuted and shall be only too pleased to be answered. A debate is all very well, but debating points are the bane of discussion. The subject-matter of this book will inevitably lead me to make assertions which cannot be supported by statistical proof, and to adduce facts whose existence can be justified only by an appeal to straws in a changing and deceptive wind. I cannot always prove what I

want to say, nor do I intend to try to do so. I have made an attempt to analyse a number of currents of thought and feeling in England at the present time, but it would be idle to pretend that I can always be objective and, were I to do so, my critics would soon disillusion me. This, then, is meant to be the start of a debate. My only hope is that it will be a useful one, and that nobody will talk to win.

The general thesis I wish to put forward is that the diminution of Great Britain's position in the world and the relatively narrow economic margin on which we have lived since the war have caused a narrowing of horizons and a sense of frustration in English society, which has been frequently, though not always consciously, expressed by English intellectuals. And this claustrophobia has been made worse by disappointment at the result of the advent of the Welfare State. Thus, the culminating success and slow decline of the two great movements of reform, which I have mentioned above, have not only left us with a shortage of ideals but also with the residual bitterness of seeing them turn out rather differently from what we had expected. The subject therefore bisects itself into a discussion, first of the psychological and material consequences of the break-up of the British Empire and Britain's decline in relative power in the world, and, secondly, of the curiously parallel reactions to the Welfare State and its imperfections, more especially its cultural imperfections. But, since I am describing English society in terms of the tensions and perplexities of its intellectuals, I must first sketch their relationship with that society and their preoccupations during the period leading up to the present day. After that I shall turn to the problems posed by our altered position in the world, and, eventually, to a discussion of what we can do to make the best of that position without succumbing to the twin temptations of an unrealistic chauvinism or a despairing lethargy. Then will come a chapter on the tensions and frustrations set up by our present type of society, which we call, for the sake of convenience, the Welfare State, but which could be named in half a dozen different and equally valid ways. And, because most contemporary controversy about our society concerns the level of its culture, this will lead naturally into one chapter on this vexed topic and another on education, which I am sufficiently old-fashioned to believe to be the only effective way—apart from that of artistic creation—to improve the quality of a nation's culture. In these chapters I shall have to discuss the problem of mass communication, which has recently become something

of a Gorgon's head to the English left, petrifying the sense of humour of all those who approach it. Then, in a conclusion, I propose to ask some questions about the future of England and its chances of avoiding the fate which history has sometimes reserved for dethroned empires. And, though I can hardly hope to answer them to my own or anyone else's satisfaction, I shall be tempted to try.

I have tried to develop the plan of this book with logic and clarity, but, of course, it is not always possible to distinguish so nicely between what belongs to one section and what to another. There is bound to be a good deal of cross-reference and even some repetition. In particular the frustrating effects of Britain's difficult economic position will crop up at almost every turn. All I can say is that I have done my best to avoid tedium, while keeping what is essential for the argument. What I am attempting is a diagnosis of a body politic and social, and the image should serve as a reminder of the dangers of too neat a dissection of the subject-matter. England, fortunately, is not dead yet, and I have no intention of conducting a post-mortem.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

This book, indeed, would be nothing, if my own concern for, and involvement in, its themes were not visible on every page. Its writing is the culmination of a long process of meditation which began, so it now seems to me, when I went to live in France a year or two after the war. At that time I had had no great reason to reflect upon the nature of English society nor any training which would have enabled me to sense the direction in which it was going. At Oxford I had read the Honours school of English language and literature, and, though I shall always be grateful for the thorough reading of the English classics that this implied, little was communicated to me which might serve as a formation in understanding the world around me or in placing my literary knowledge in the framework of a larger continuity of world history. Some initiation into the main currents of European thought might have provided such a formation, but competence in dealing with the history of ideas was not one of the characteristics of the Oxford English school at that time, and an ability to read a few texts in Anglo-Saxon was supposed to be a better discipline for the student than a working knowledge of French or German. The training was rather a

narrow one, and, probably through my own fault, I did not make a success of it. Looking back now, I can recognize some germs of ideas, but, for the most part, I came out of my studies in English literature almost as immature as I went into them.

I was up at Oxford from 1943 to 1946 and, of course, acquired the usual memories—of friends, of Oxford summers, of bookshops and old buildings. But during part of that time England was at war, and my family lived in Blackheath, an area of south-east London which between 1940 and 1945 was variously bombarded by aeroplanes, flying-bombs and rockets. So that my first inkling of the insecurity which lies behind all civilization came with the sight of landmarks that I had known for most of my life disappearing overnight in a cloud of dust and rubble. I do not want to overdramatize this—it was an experience common to many people—but it did make an impression on me which I did not realize at the time but which I now see clearly enough. And that impression was reinforced and made conscious when I went to study at the Sorbonne in 1947. In England at that time it was still possible to deceive oneself about the extent to which Western Europe had been affected by the war. We had not been invaded and we had emerged as the victors—for the moment that seemed enough. In France, however, there could be no such mistake. The demoralization was profound and the political impotence frightening. It was all too evident what effect the loss of power has on an old nation accustomed to its place in the world. At that time I thought of Europe (with more pessimism than the situation warranted) as possibly heading for a break-down of the kind which destroyed the Roman Empire, a break-down proceeding not from 'barbarians' in Gibbon's sense of the word but from a general decline of material means and spiritual standards. I read many books on the 'dark ages' and felt admiration for the forgotten scribes who continued their task of transmitting texts which they hardly understood, and which must have seemed useless or irrelevant at a time when the horizon was red with flames from a Viking or Hungarian raid. It seemed to me then (and still seems to me now) that there are moments in history when the maintenance of civilization depends upon working as best one can, even if the chances of success are slight and the utility of the work hardly apparent.

This view of Western Europe and the parallels it suggested to me were falsified by what I now recognize as a romantic enjoyment of

pessimistic attitudes which was very much part of the Parisian atmosphere in the late forties. But the condition of France also drew my attention to that of England, and in 1947 the comparison seemed to be all in our favour. Britain, with its stable political system, its aspirations towards social justice and its wise granting of independence to India and Pakistan, made a striking contrast with the political anarchy and lack of civic sense in a France which was just beginning to embark on the futile repression of Viet-Nameese nationalism. I did not know then (what I now realize) that in France political government is a less fundamental institution than in England, and I fully shared the comfortable myth of those years which presented Englishmen with a picture of their country diminished in power perhaps, but superior in morality and wisdom. It was the moment when posters showed the faces of children looking into rays of sunlight, when B.B.C. announcers assured us in solemn tones that we were moving into a better world and when the phrase 'Britain's moral leadership' came readily to the lips of politicians. 'Britain's moral leadership'—how far away it seems now and what fools we were not to recognize this kind of slogan for the comforting self-delusion that it was!

Yet even then there were rifts within the myth. If France was catastrophic, England was drab and dull. If from across the Channel Europe seemed to be rushing towards an abyss, in England it appeared to be suffering from arterio-sclerosis which, while borne with admirable tolerance and discipline by the population, effectively removed much of the colour and excitement from life. In many ways England was a haven of refuge compared to the petty tyrannies that beset French life, but it was a country being subjected to the terrible effort of keeping up with the international Joneses, while at the same time trying to reconstruct a large part of its own house. Every time that I went home between 1947 and 1952 I had an impression of a sense of strain pervading the country, a sense of strain which the authorities always told us to bear because it would not be much longer now. And since I have lived in England again and practised journalism there that feeling remains with me unchanged: we still live under a pressure which, I have come to believe, betokens a lack of adjustment to the world we live in. At times that pressure has been greater or less (its fluctuations have been marked by the economic crises which have pursued us since the war), but no government has done anything fundamental to remove it until Mr. Macmillan's

decision in 1961 to apply for membership of the European Economic Community. That might, indeed, end it and not only in its economic aspects. For, though our malaise reveals itself materially as an inability to earn our living, spiritually its name is isolation and loss of direction.

However, that was a later conclusion. In the late forties I was simply conscious of something wrong with my country, but, as there were obviously also things wrong with most European countries at the time, I hardly analysed the feeling. Nor had I any sympathy with those who moaned about the food in England or with the rest of the expatriate whining about the horrors of the Welfare State. That seemed to me purely despicable—the more so in that most of those who vaunted the abundance of steaks and butter in France had never had to live there all the year round on a small income.¹ I admired the Labour Government and its achievements, which gave an English intellectual something to be genuinely proud of: the fulfilment of as honourable a moral programme as any government has had. For the moment I merely noted that there was a sense of constriction about contemporary England which irritated me and did not get better as time went on. There was never a crisis which could be faced, but always the approach of a crisis which meant the shelving of all imaginative efforts to modernize or adorn. At times it seemed as if we were bound for an eternity of shabby Utopias beginning with a blare of publicity and ending in a huddle of Nissen huts and derelict building sites.

In this way, hopeful but worried, I began to think about England, its past and its future. From the latitude of Paris it was easier to realize that many commonly accepted beliefs were untrue. Viewing British political parties through the eyes of foreigners, I could see that, in large measure, they shared the same faults and the same virtues, and that what they shared was more important than the matters in which they differed. The decline in Britain's power was also far more visible from the continent than it was at home. And it soon became clear to me that many of the remedies and expedients proposed by those guiding the country had been rendered monstrously out of date by the great divide of the war years. I felt more and more conscious of the gap which

¹ At this point I should explain that I do not believe in knocking one's own country abroad, whether it is done by business men on the Côte d'Azur or by left-wing politicians travelling in Eastern Europe.

separated me and my opinions from those of men only a few years older than myself, but who had reached the age of twenty-one before 1939.

When I began to work as a journalist in London I added other observations to these and gradually acquired the intention of putting them down on paper. More and more I felt my country to be in a dilemma which was hardly ever mentioned and not often even realized by the leaders of opinion. By now, in the middle fifties, loss of material power was becoming apparent. The British Empire was turning into a series of new African and Asian states, and, while some grumbled at, and others applauded this inevitable process, there were not many who faced its implications in terms of a narrowing of England's possibilities. The most popular theory seemed to be that we should keep our 'influence' by a sort of spiritual legerdemain, but there were few indications of how this was to be accomplished in practice. Moral superiority and a tottering economy seemed a poor combination of qualities with which to build a national future. 'Certain peoples,' wrote Unamuno, 'through contemplating their national navel fall into a hypnotic sleep and contemplate nothingness.'¹ During the late forties and early fifties British life gave the impression of this fascination with virtuous vacancy, and at times it was difficult not to be lulled by it oneself. The initial virtue, after all, was real. But then so was the navel.

Then there was Suez—the end of more dreams than one. Later on in this book I shall have to speak of its general significance. For the moment I am being more personal, though for me, as for most people, this was an agonizing and humiliating moment. I had no doubt that the policy was wrong even on the most practical level (covering the canal-users' conference for the *Spectator* I had seen trick after trick thrown away by the British government), but could I be entirely glad that it should fail? Can one wish one's country to be revealed in an act of chicanery or to have the penalties for international fraud exacted from it? I opposed the Suez expedition, attacked the policies which led to it, but I could not rejoice at the final fiasco. The dream of moral leadership, with which we had fleetingly comforted ourselves, ended on the banks of the Sweet-water Canal, and we were left with the disagreeable thought that we too were not immune from outbursts of chauvinism or from politicians who judged the world by pre-1914 standards. Afterwards it seemed only

¹ Miguel de Unamuno, *L'Essence de l'Espagne* (Paris, 1923).

more urgent to reflect on England's increasingly cramped position and on ways of alleviating it.

Others besides myself thought the same thing. It was after 1956 that a spate of books on our present discontents began to appear in the shops and on the library shelves. A year or so after Suez there was published a collection of essays called *Declaration*, to which the contributors were mostly young intellectuals more or less in the public eye,¹ and which might therefore be supposed to contain complaints about contemporary society and proposals for its reform of some interest and importance. But, on reading the contributions, this illusion was soon dispelled. What was striking in these essays was the trivial nature of the complaints about society, the lack of concrete ideas for its bettering and, most significantly of all, the tone of bad temper presiding throughout. There was Colin Wilson lamenting that 'the pseudo-philosophy of our professors—such men as Ayer and Russell—take[s] us closer to the complete break-down of our civilization day by day'. There was John Osborne talking about the 'national swill' of 'Royalty religion' and also about the Church of England ('its bishops have sounded like bewigged old perverts at Assizes'). There was Kenneth Tynan writing, rather belatedly, the 'prime enemy [of the drama] is Pauline Christianity, with its horrified distaste for the sexual act' and disliking Evelyn Waugh and club theatres. There was Lindsay Anderson discovering that Kingsley Amis 'reveals himself as a coward' and that John Wain 'is talking already like an empty-headed, avuncular Tory'.

Naturally, after reading a good deal of this kind of thing, I was tempted to throw *Declaration* into the waste-paper basket and forget it. The irascibility of the tone and the superficiality of the analysis got on my nerves. There was not one basic idea about England or its present difficulties in the whole book. At best it was a mere apeing of the thirties, with the Royal Family, the Church of England and the condition of the London theatre substituted for what twenty years back had been the real evils of the rise of Fascism and the depression. It hardly seemed worth worrying about.

But then it struck me that *Declaration* and its contributors might themselves be the symptoms rather than the analysts of a process of which

¹ *Declaration* (MacGibbon and Kee, 1957) was edited by Tom Maschler. The contributors were Lindsay Anderson, Kenneth Tynan, Stuart Holroyd, John Osborne, Doris Lessing, Colin Wilson, Bill Hopkins, John Wain.

they were unconscious. Let me put it this way. If I accidentally jostle a man in the street and he turns on me with a snarl of rage, the question I am likely to ask myself will concern his state of mind and not my own degree of guilt. Is he mad? Has he just been vaccinated? Or is he simply bad-tempered, invariably taking violent offence at the slightest accident? So with the contributors to *Declaration*. There were certainly reasons why English intellectuals writing in 1957 should feel a strong general irritation with their society, but it was clear from these essays that their authors were not aware of the underlying causes of their own attitudes. They were in the position of a man who becomes furious with his wife when the dinner is late without realizing that he is no longer in love with her.¹

I shall not dwell any longer on the subject of *Declaration*, which in itself is of trivial importance. But a reading of it convinced me that underlying facts about contemporary England which I had thought to be evident to every intellectual were not so and also made me ask myself what was causing the mood of nervous irritability which was afflicting the contributors. And, as book after book and article after article showed the same mixture of bad temper and irrationality, my conviction was confirmed and my curiosity whetted. A considerable part of what follows is the result of my belief that this ill humour on the part of young intellectuals is directly connected with deeper trends in English society, which they themselves unconsciously express, but are unwilling or unable to perceive.²

So that by the time I came to write this book two subjects were uppermost in my mind: the condition of England, which appeared to me to be not without its nuance of desperation, and the deflections of judgement which this entailed in the opinions held by intellectuals. I have tried to express the first of these themes and to show its relationship to the second. In so doing I am conscious of my presumption. But in the course of thinking over these problems I have become convinced that it

¹ The phrase 'angry young men' was, I think, first generally used after the publication of *Declaration*, although Mr. Osborne's Jimmy Porter may have had something to do with its currency. I have not used it here, as genuine anger has something of a cathartic effect, and the tone I have criticized in *Declaration* could never produce any such purgative effect. It is more like a steady, irritable grumbling.

² 'What people think and say—public opinion—is always to be respected but it almost never expresses their true feelings with any precision. The moan of the sick man does not indicate the name of his disease.' Ortega y Gasset, *Invertebrate Spain* (Allen and Unwin, 1937), p. 36.

is a very difficult and hazardous thing to carry on the business of an intellectual in a country whose power is declining and where so many unseen pressures are at work upon critics of society. Naturally, I myself am not immune to senseless bad temper, futile rebellion and sterile chauvinism, and it seems to me urgent that the sources of these emotions should be laid bare. I have criticized other people's thought, but in order to do this I have had to probe my own. No doubt this book too is a symptom, but I have done my best to be conscious of its provisional character.

Finally, in writing about England, I believe that I have learnt something—if only how fond I am of this ridiculously contradictory country, whose inhabitants are so full of kindness and self-depreciatory humour, of social stiffness and unaspiring conservatism, that one might think them lazy and flaccid if one had not seen them when they were formidable. I have often denounced the failings of English intellectuals, but how they shine in comparison with the harsh dogmatism and neo-Hegelian nonsense of their continental fellows. The working-class woman in a queue in the winter of 1945 saying that we should send food to the Germans if they were hungry because 'we're all human, aren't we?'; the old gentleman writing to *The Times* about the inhumanity of man to deer; the whole-heartedly Rabelaisian reaction to the appearance of a London vicar before a consistorial court—all these things are the marks of a common, but far from vulgar, humanity, which allows for the individual and delights in the eccentric. We are less stereotyped than social scientists would have us be, and much more united in a common bloody-mindedness than class warriors would care to admit. In a dynamic modern world we have reached the stage of wishing to be things rather than to do them—here the workman hurrying away from the factory to get back to his garden or his pigeon-loft is only imitating the aristocratic attitudes of the gentleman—and this may be a fault, but it is a sympathetic fault and one which would have been understood in ancient Greece. With all its failings, England represents a style of life for which I can feel only affection even when it is at its most irritating. The word 'patriotism' is not much used nowadays, but I take it to consist in something of this feeling for the living quality of a country. There is an English personality which must change and grow, but which can be altered only within limits defined by its past and whose existence reformers will neglect at their peril. We must strive to improve ourselves, but we cannot do it by placing a barrier

between us and our history. If patriotism in its broadest sense implies a concern for reform it is also true that the will to reform requires patriotism if it is to succeed. A nation is not a piece of machinery which can be dismantled and put together again. It is an organic whole, a being which must be considered with understanding, with love, even, if it is to be amended.

THE INTELLECTUALS

I lately heard a man of thought and energy contrasting the want of ardour and movement which he now found amongst young men in this country with what he remembered in his own youth, twenty years ago. 'What reformers we were then!' he exclaimed; 'what a zeal we had! how we canvassed every institution in Church and State, and were prepared to remodel them all on first principles!' He was inclined to regret, as a spiritual flagging, the lull which he saw. I am disposed rather to regard it as a pause in which the turn to a new mode of spiritual progress is being accomplished.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

Il ne faut pas laisser les intellectuels jouer avec les allumettes . . .

JACQUES PRÉVERT

Is there such a thing as an English intellectual? It is as well to pose the question from the start, since anyone acquainted with the habits and social position of intellectuals on the continent of Europe must have serious doubts as to whether the same word can reasonably be applied to English conditions. Over the centuries continental intellectuals have created their own mythology: the feverish discussions in cafés, the irreparable quarrels, the speeches at congresses, the signatures to manifestoes, the martyrdoms averted or suffered and, if things go well, the apotheoses when emissaries of the government speed to the bedside of the dying master to shower him with decorations and valedictory messages. Across the Channel intellectuals, whether they are writers, scientists, artists or university teachers, live more publicly and more dangerously than we do here. They are expected to have their say on political questions, and are not infrequently the first to suffer when those questions are resolved decisively one way or another. Perhaps it is just this that makes the tone of intellectual life at once more urgent and

more unforgiving than is the case here. It can even make it more realistic; though, judging by recent experience, this would seem to be exceptional. It is more accurate to say that continental intellectuals sometimes have within their experience facts which do not come the way of their English counterparts. In England Orwell's 1984 has been criticized as the morbid imaginings of a sick man, but in Poland, in 1957, its readers asked how he could have known what Stalinism felt like without actually going through it himself. There is a difference here in political awareness which is to the advantage of the continental intellectual, though it is more doubtful whether political life gains from his interest in it. In the collision between politics and the writer it is politics which is the loser in Europe, in England the quality of writing.

Continental intellectuals are public figures who are expected to play a considerable part in the life of their country, and this status has the effect of giving them a collective existence as the leaders of opinion, a mixture between Moses and Jeremiah, respected if not always obeyed by politicians and bureaucrats, who may put them in prison but never submit them to the final indignity of failing to take them seriously. Traditionally disaffected from the bourgeoisie, denouncing it from left or right, they are none the less cherished by it and take their place with some confidence as the spearpoint of an élite possessing the right to judge and guide society. To this élite they address themselves. The *Proletkult* of a philosopher such as Sartre is purely intellectual. If his impassioned appeal to his readers not to drive the French working class to despair by acknowledging the existence of such blots on the face of the Socialist sixth of the world as Vorkuta have any effect it will not be because they are read by French workers. They remain entirely ignorant of these attempts to save them from destruction, and it is one indication of the self-confidence felt by French intellectuals that Sartre should appear quite unmoved by this lack of communication with a class in which he claims to see the historical process incarnate.¹

The English intellectual is hardly recognizable in this portrait of

¹ Another striking instance of this self-confidence occurs in Sartre's preface to a recent reissue of Paul Nizan's *Aden Arabie*. Lamenting the catastrophe of the French left, '*ce grand cadavre à la renverse, où les vers se sont mis*', it never seems to strike him that he himself, the most influential teacher of that left, may bear some degree of responsibility for its plight. A closer involvement in politics on the part of intellectuals may lead not to a greater realism but to the construction of an imaginary world far removed from any concrete political fact.

his European colleagues.¹ As a rule he does not spend much time drawing up manifestoes or taking part in congresses, and the very mention of any group activity is often sufficient to send him scuttling for shelter. In fact, those few devoted souls who are regularly to be found at international gatherings of intellectuals tend to lose face, though they are usually quick to protest that they do not believe in the utility of the expedition and are there only for the trip—to Tokyo, Mexico, Leningrad, anywhere which costs too much to reach on one's own resources. 'You are a rogue, John, but I pardon you, since you do it for your living,' said Charles II on finding John Churchill with one of his mistresses, and this tolerant approach is frequently echoed in London intellectual circles when a confrère is discovered to have lectured before the Addis Ababa P.E.N. club on 'Whither democracy?' or 'Can the novel survive?'. Earning one's living excuses a multitude of sins.

Behind this individualistic stance on the part of our intellectuals may lurk an Englishman's normal dislike of taking things too seriously—more especially when they involve an intrusion on his privacy. There are, however, other elements in it. One is an ideal image of a thinker of any sort, which may stem from the Romantic movement, but has been sufficiently modified by the aristocratic conception of the gentleman to shun the outward display of emotion. At the backs of their minds most English intellectuals would like to be shy, proud, formidable men of easily demonstrable talent, great industry and independent means, living in the country (whether in castle or cottage) and descending into the world's arena only on occasions of almost religious solemnity. Johnson was the last English intellectual positively to revel in his urban existence, and even before his time Congreve had shocked Voltaire by wishing to be considered as a country gentleman rather than as a writer of plays. Of course, this ideal no longer represents any possible reality. Most intellectuals live in towns and like it there, nor can they achieve under modern economic pressure that status of easy amateurism which was bequeathed to them as an aspiration from the eighteenth and nineteenth

¹ I say the 'English intellectual' deliberately. Throughout this book I wish to exclude Scottish and Welsh intellectuals from my remarks. Their position is different (and more difficult), and I am not qualified to deal with it. Of course, I shall sometimes have to speak of 'Great Britain', but this is simply the name of the state which England dominates culturally and politically. One sign of this dominance is the way in which the more old-fashioned sections of our political parties have their strongholds in Scotland, Wales and Ulster.

centuries. But the existence (even in the most shadowy sense) of a desire for retirement to a hermitage does affect the organization of intellectual society. In a sense, it exists by pretending not to be intellectual at all, and for this the slight scorn with which it is traditionally regarded by the men of affairs, the governing classes, is also responsible. Whether or not it is due to the public-school system (personally, I should think not: Nancy Mitford's Uncle Matthew existed as a type long before Dr. Arnold and would not have thought much of him—was, indeed, described by his son as a 'barbarian'), it is undeniable that in British public life the word 'intellectual' carries a mildly pejorative sense. The trade-union leaders who denounce Labour Party intellectuals are running true to their forbears of the squirarchy. They would have been at home in Bassetshire.

All in all, I doubt if this faint residuum of suspicion has a bad effect on English intellectual life. If it keeps novelists writing novels instead of addressing mass meetings, and scientists in their laboratories instead of holding forth on subjects about which they are ill qualified to give an opinion, it may even do good. It does, however, deprive the English intellectual of many of those convenient markings by which we can distinguish his colleagues abroad. On the one hand he fades into the eccentric and the tramp, and, on the other, into a well-educated professional class. And one unfortunate result of this situation is that anyone who takes the trouble to be sufficiently thrusting can give himself undue prominence by an aggressive assumption of continental intellectual manners, leaving no petition unsigned and no controversy unassayed. This is much as though a chameleon, wishing to draw attention to itself against a forest background, should try to turn red. But chameleons burst when they seek publicity in this way, whereas the only fate awaiting intellectuals is to receive it.¹

Exhibitionists apart, however, it is no easy task to decide who is an intellectual and who is not. The *Oxford English Dictionary* goes some way with its 'an intellectual being; a person having superior powers of intellect', but any attempt to apply this to everyone who can be placed in the social category of intellectual seems to show that it takes too much for granted. The definition of the adjective—'given to pursuits that exercise the intellect'—meets the strong feeling we all have that certain people by

¹ It would be invidious to give examples, but I have no doubt my readers can think of one or two for themselves. In general it can be taken that excessive pre-occupation with publicity is a sign of declining talent.

virtue of what they do (or purport to do) can be described as 'intellectuals', but is rather too wide. No doubt, an ideal description would take into account the very essence of the thing: the idea that true intellectuals must continually be criticizing their own basic assumptions about life, and that this preoccupation with active thought must be given priority over their other interests. This, however, leaves out the accepted social meaning of the word. The condition of an intellectual, then, must be said to consist in a tension between a spiritual aspiration and a social occupation. There are those—doctors, lawyers, journalists—whose work might be supposed to classify them as intellectuals, but not all of whom lead a sufficiently active mental life to justify the description. And there are others whose jobs—tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor—do not necessarily demand that they should qualify as intellectuals, but who in fact do so. In England the distinguishing mark of an intellectual cannot be largely equated (as in France) with the possession of the abstract habits of thought inculcated by a certain type of higher education. It can be said with some assurance that those who utter their thoughts in words or undertake a task of imaginative expression are aspiring (though not necessarily successfully aspiring) intellectuals, and that it is from them that evidence about the class as a whole must be gathered. But we should also be aware of a large body of unproductive intellectuals, consumers of thought and sometimes transmitters of it in lesson, argument, ordinary conversation. They may act as intermediaries between those whose ideas or imaginings aim at originality and a wider audience to which their access is fortuitous and personal. Their role in the intellectual life of a society can be dimly perceived, but they are liable to be neglected in histories of thought. This is an injustice, but an inevitable one: historians of ideas must concern themselves primarily with the articulate.

Since the English intellectual is liable to crop up anywhere, and since his intellectualism is often self-taught, it is hard to generalize about his habits. He is, in fact, usually to be found in the professional classes—even if he does not come from them he is likely to end among them—and he shares to a large extent their ethos, its mildly liberal views, its occasionally sharp Puritanism, its respect for hard work and also its knack of bringing influence to bear on national life from the inside rather than the outside. In 1935 a Russian critic, Dimitry Svyatopolk-Mirsky, published a book called *The Intelligentzia of Great Britain*,¹ which flayed

¹ Gollancz.

contemporary writers and philosophers in the name of an 'objective' Marxism, which was anything but disinterested. Among the numerous errors of appreciation to be found in this forgotten work the title is possibly the most glaring. There never has been an English 'intelligentsia' in the Russian sense of a large body of intellectuals living outside the national community and violently critical of it. The kind of relationship which an English intellectual can have with his own society is more accurately indicated by a study of the career of J. M. Keynes than by any talk of 'outsiders'. If one man did more than any other to make the functioning of the Welfare State possible, that man was Keynes. With his formidable brain and his persuasive pen he was a first-class propagandist for ideas whose originality was genuinely revolutionary. He changed our world more than most individuals have changed it, but he did so by being the agitator of the committee-room and the senior common-room rather than of the street corner.

Keynes is an excellent example of the practical uses to which the status accorded by society to intellectuals can be put. And it can be said that English intellectuals have usually exercised their strongest influence on their country by pragmatic reform from within, rather than by revolutionary attacks from outside, its social system. This, of course, might change, were there to be considerable intellectual under-employment and a consequent narrowing of opportunities for those who feel that their talents entitle them to a modest place in the sun. In these conditions we might come to have an intelligentsia in the continental sense, but this would hardly be a matter for self-congratulation. But, for the moment, the English intellectual is far from being a *révolté* or a *déraciné*. Indeed, since the war his rootedness has markedly increased in that a new generation has reacted against the cosmopolitanism of its predecessors and brought the English provinces into the centre of a cultural picture from which they had been absent since the nineteenth century. And it is a mark of the continuity of English life that these 'new men' should still bear the hallmarks of old institutions, notably the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. So far from being uprooted, young English intellectuals err on the side of being too exclusively interested in the problems of their own society (the present vogue of sociology is one symptom of this).

In short, English intellectuals are less spectacular in their activities but possibly have more of an assured place in their own society than their continental fellows. The tolerance of English life, due to the existence of

the Channel and a class system which allows great latitude to eccentricity, endows them with a comfortable sense of security, if not necessarily of approval on the part of their fellow citizens. Sometimes, indeed, the latter may appear to neglect them and their ideas, but this neglect is more apparent than real and is in any case better than persecution. In Hampstead and in Chelsea our ruthless political realists can excuse intellectual tyranny without the disagreeable necessity of having to encounter it themselves. It is a significant measure of the freedom from interference which English intellectuals enjoy that the recent trial of Lady Chatterley should have seemed so famous a victory. Their frequent desire to identify themselves with groups lying outside their own middle-class world is the result of personal guilt and neurosis rather than a sign of belonging to a class in revolt.

Their participation in and acceptance of a tolerant society may also explain why the political activities of English intellectuals have a strong element of make-believe about them, and, more particularly, why their judgement of foreign countries and systems of government is so often incredibly naive. The Webbs were deeply involved in English politics, and their influence was profound. It can be said without too much exaggeration that if Keynes made the Welfare State possible it was the Webbs who thought of it. Yet Beatrice Webb, who had spent a lifetime in the wings of political life, could write in her diary for May 14th, 1932:

'Instead of the despairing apathy or cynical listlessness of capitalist countries there is enthusiasm and dedicated service on the part of millions of workers in Soviet Russia. The one big drawback lies in the activities of the G.P.U., and even here the U.S.A. runs Russia very close.'¹

¹ Beatrice Webb, *Diaries 1924-32* (Longmans, 1956), p. 308. Perhaps it is worth quoting some more of her remarks concerning Russia and America. They are revealing. 'As I read *Look at Chicago*, the record of vice, corruption and lawless violence, and compare it with the American journalist's account of Puritan Moscow, one doubts the superiority, in law and order, and social manners of the American over the Russian city. In sincerity, in faith and zeal for public welfare as well as in personal self-control the Russian ruling class seems superior to the Anglo-Saxon.' (June 22nd, 1930.) 'Certainly the daily life—whether of work or recreation—of the Russian Communist has become intensely serious and public-spirited, whilst that of the U.S.A. citizen is becoming increasingly dominated by pecuniary gain and frivolous pleasure.' (December 28th, 1930.) 'The U.S.A. is verging on starving and terrorizing the poor; and Soviet Russia is enforcing with great brutality the subordination of all to the common will expressed in a General Plan for the enrichment

It is no wonder that a month or so before she had noted: 'All I know is that *I wish* Soviet Communism to succeed—a wish which tends to distort one's judgement.'¹

It did indeed. As these jottings from her diary—made before the trip to the U.S.S.R.—show, the cause of the famous question-mark in *Soviet Communism: A New Civilization?* was lost from the start.

The politics of English intellectuals have always been singularly one-sided. For the most part their sympathies are vaguely liberal, an orientation which can carry them much further to the left, and even into sympathy with authoritarianism, if it is called by the right name. Instinctively they are radical politically, though not necessarily actively so. On the other hand, however unclear the majority of intellectuals may be concerning their political beliefs, it is only on the left that any organized political doctrine exists at all. There never has been an intellectual English conservatism offering anything more positive than an absence of belief in solutions and a deep pessimism about human nature. Those intellectuals,

of the whole country.' (February 4th, 1931.) 'Communism represents a frantic effort to make the Russian people honest and disinterested, punctual and assiduous in the service of the community—on these issues it is intensely and fanatically puritan. In this devotion to a State, Communist Russia is exactly opposite to U.S.A. with its amazing laxness and tolerance of fraud and self-interest in public officials. Even murder and robbery with violence are made almost reputable if these crimes are committed for the purpose of making profit.' (June 30th, 1931.) '... the second Labour Cabinet fell on the express and openly acknowledged ground that the Federal Bank of U.S.A. practically demanded this dismissal of the Labour Cabinet as a condition of their financial loans. It looks as if Great Britain is to be a pawn in the struggle between the two great forces in the world of today—Russian Communism and American Capitalism.' (September 23rd, 1931.) 'What attracts us in Soviet Russia, and it is useless to deny that we are prejudiced in its favour, is that its constitution, on the one hand, bears out our *Constitution of a Socialist Commonwealth*, and, on the other, supplies a soul to that conception of government. . . . Though not requiring chastity, Communists are expected to be puritan in their personal conduct, not to waste energy, time or health on sex, food or drink.' (January 4th, 1932.) The interest of these quotations is that they show many attitudes which have become the small change of left-wing polemics since the war. The whole neutralist argument (less the bomb) is already present. (1) American capitalism is hostile to British Labour. (2) Russian Communism is more moral than American capitalism. (3) Russian Communists are serious and public-spirited in contrast to the corruption and anarchy prevailing in the U.S.A. (4) Even in questions of personal liberty America is as bad as Russia. It is interesting to notice how a representative of the non-conformist tradition such as Beatrice Webb was attracted by those very features of the Soviet system (its prudery and grim joylessness) which would have appalled anyone else.

¹ Beatrice Webb, *ibid.*, p. 305.

whose characters incline them towards a Conservative attitude towards political questions are usually unable to produce much more than pragmatic criticism of their opponents' assumptions. They have no system, and, of course, right-wing thinkers would be something of a paradox in a country where the party of the right retains power by judicious thefts of progressive clothing. The one serious movement towards the provision of a Conservative philosophy was that which came to birth just before the First World War and was associated with the names of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and T. E. Hulme. After the war, during which Hulme was killed, their views found expression in the review *Criterion*, where Catholicism, classicism and royalism stalked side by side, set off by brilliant criticism of romantic, liberal and democratic ideas. The influence of this movement on cultural life was very great indeed; on religious life less great; and on political life minimal. The empiricism of the English right was hardly likely to find itself at ease with the coruscating intolerance of two young Americans and one young Englishman nourished on French philosophy (Bergson and, less aimably, *Action Française* and its corrosive prose). Nor would the electors have approved if it had adopted hierarchical theories, which, while explaining perfectly the relation of an artist to his audience, by no means suffice when applied to a politician and his fellow countrymen. The falseness of this view of politics seems to me to lie in its transfer to another sphere of criteria which are adequate to judge literature, music and art, but which are too absolute to be applied to the human relations through which all government is carried on. And the reverse error is made by the left when it regards cultural matters in the light of such adjectives as 'democratic' or 'popular'. Culture is an activity which is aristocratic by nature; politics is quite the opposite, and attempts to speak of one in terms of the other are bound to be disastrous.

BLOOMSBURY AND THE THIRTIES

The mistakes made in the thirties were simpler, though here too we can see the difficulties encountered by the intellectual who wishes to exercise political influence. And the subject is of some importance. It is hardly possible to talk about the last fifteen years of English intellectual life without giving some account of that previous generation against which we have reacted so strongly. There was a time when the thirties were hardly mentioned without a sneer, but today it is possible to be

rather more just to the avatars of the haunted liberal conscience and to the kind of social involvement which began to be fashionable from 1929 onwards.

For the two primary factors in this new concern for politics were unemployment at home and the rise of Fascism abroad, and it cannot be said too often that it was those who cried in alarm who were right and the soothers and reassurers who were wrong. Against this background much can be understood and forgiven: the mistaken membership of the party; the muddle-headedness that led some Socialists to protest against the Italian invasion of Abyssinia and simultaneously to denounce rearmament at home; the pot-pourri of 'popular fronts' and Communist-dominated organizations to help a Spain busily engaged in suppressing the Trotskyists of the P.O.U.M.; the *Schadenfreude* concerning the recurrent defeats of liberal democracy. What is clear is that many who took part in politics at this time had no real idea of what was involved in political action, not the foggiest notion of what they were letting themselves in for by playing with totalitarianism and a total ignorance of the gulf separating British from continental politics. But the impulses which led them into this labyrinth were honourable, and this should be remembered.

The ignorance of how foreign countries carry on their affairs was to appear all too plainly at the time of the Spanish Civil War. Orwell wrote that 'one of the dreariest effects of this war has been to teach me that the left-wing Press is every bit as spurious and dishonest as that of the right',¹ and it seems evident that the activities of the S.I.M. (*Servicio de Investigación Militar*) did little to discourage most of the left-wing British journalists and intellectuals on the loose in Spain (others, of course, were discouraged and went through the process of disillusionment which is so well described in Humphrey Slater's novel *The Heretics*). Here there was innocence and illusion, but perhaps also something more disagreeable: at best a search for a *nouveau frisson*, at worst the worship of successful power. Orwell certainly exaggerated when he accused the intellectual left of becoming less and less hostile to Hitler as Nazi Germany won success after success. But there is no denying the truth in Keynes's

¹ *Homage to Catalonia* (Longmans, 1954), p. 68. Orwell himself was also wrong in underestimating the necessity of the Communist contribution to the defence of the Spanish Republic. Without Communist discipline and understanding of the nature of modern warfare resistance would have collapsed far earlier than it did.

letter to the *New Statesman*: 'The intelligentia of the Left were the loudest in demanding that the Nazi aggression should be resisted at all costs. When it comes to a showdown, scarce four weeks have passed before they remember that they are pacifists and write defeatist letters to your columns. . . .'¹

In fact, the political adventures of the thirties were based on a considerable misunderstanding. W. H. Auden could paint a picture of the rich cosseted with luxury and protected from the harsh winds of reality, but it was a picture full of hesitations and ambiguities:

'Pass on, admire the view of the massif
Through plate-glass windows of the Sport Hotel;
Join there the insufficient units
Dangerous, easy, in furs, in uniform
And constellated at reserved tables
Supplied with feelings by an efficient band
Relayed elsewhere to farmers and their dogs
Sitting in kitchens in the stormy fens.'²

The 'Sport Hotel' is obviously in the Alps (Bavaria, Austria, Switzerland), while the word 'fens' situates the 'farmers and their dogs' in Norfolk, but, in a sense, the reverse was true. It was the poet himself and other English intellectuals who, whether in Norfolk, Devon or the Lake District, were protected from the throes of a disintegrating Europe by the plate-glass windows of British security and parliamentary government. All their exhortations and manifestoes brought no other consequence upon themselves than that of an increasing literary success, as Virginia Woolf pointed out at the time. In a deep sense they were irresponsible; to talk of 'the necessary murder' (however it may have been originally intended) is only excusable for someone who is actively participating in a situation where he may get murdered himself. English intellectuals of the thirties could not be in that situation, and many of their utterances have the idiotic complacency of a bystander exhorting a man in agony to 'be brave'.

Behind many of the attitudes of the thirties lay Bloomsbury, seeping like a refined and enervating mist into every corner of intellectual life.

¹ *New Statesman and Nation*, October 14th, 1939. Quoted in R. F. Harrod's *John Maynard Keynes* (Macmillan, 1951), p. 488.

² W. H. Auden, *Poems* (Faber and Faber, 1930), p. 87.

The group of brilliant men and women, which formed around an original Cambridge nucleus, had its own faith consisting partly in a way of life that often verged on preciosity and partly in a robust nineteenth-century optimism.

'We were among the last of the Utopians, or meliorists as they are sometimes called, who believe in a continuing moral progress by virtue of which the human race already consists of reliable, rational, decent people, influenced by truth and objective standards, who can be safely released from the outward restraints of convention and traditional standards and inflexible rules of conduct, and left, from now onwards, to their own sensible devices, pure motives and reliable intuitions of the good.'¹

To this they added a refinement of analysis in human relations, and a profound scepticism about human institutions and beliefs which followed naturally from their confidence in the right-thinking individual. And this scepticism, with its fine patina of irony, was something more easily communicable to a generation shaken out of belief than the self-confidence which made Bloomsbury so sure that its values were the right ones. 'It did not occur to us to respect the extraordinary accomplishment of our predecessors in the ordering of life . . . or the elaborate framework which they had devised to protect this order.'² They were the last pre-1914 English intellectuals, the representatives of an age when it was possible to mock the pillars of society with complete assurance that they would not collapse upon the heads of the mockers. Applied to twentieth-century politics, their attitude could lead to the frivolity, which sometimes irritated Keynes, or to a wildly unreal appreciation of what was happening in the world around them.³ For all its humanity the

¹ J. M. Keynes, *Two Memoirs* (Hart-Davis, 1949), pp. 98-9.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

³ There is a singular example of this in an essay by E. M. Forster, 'Post-Munich', *Two Cheers for Democracy* (E. Arnold, 1951), p. 35. Mr. Forster observes that 'Sensitive people are having a particularly humiliating time just now. Looking at the international scene, they see, with a clearness denied to politicians, that if Fascism wins we are done for, and that we must become Fascist to win.' The consequence is that 'Their grasp on reality paralyses them. Paradoxically, they become more and more negative and ineffective, until leadership passes to their inferiors.' This is an accurate description of Bloomsbury (or post-Bloomsbury) faced with a situation in which no rational and civilized expedient will serve. But it is curious that Mr. Forster should have failed to see that this particular dilemma is totally false, and that

Bloomsbury creed had not sufficient energy to deal with extreme situations. It depended too much on the assumption that the world was progressing towards a state of things where everyone would be beautiful and refined and clever to be able to help the young intellectuals of the thirties repel the new barbarities to which they were exposed. 'The fact of the matter is that, broadly, outsiders were neglected. It was a world within a world. By concentrating on the criticism of their friends, they focused their thoughts.'¹ The 'reliable intuitions of the good' existed, but they were buried beneath the exclusiveness and the ironies of a clique, and, for that reason, less easily accessible to outsiders than the series of feline dabs which constituted a running commentary on society and politics. Bloomsbury possessed a treasure it could not transmit to its heirs. What it left them was a curse of insecurity and guilt.

INEFFECTUAL LIBERALS

Guilt was the result of social consciousness added to the inheritance of Bloomsbury and fortified by a strong dose of Freudian psychoanalysis, and guilt is always a bad basis for political action, since it robs those who secrete it of practical effectiveness, paralysing them at the moment of decision. To the questions posed by the Nazi or Communist sphinx to English intellectuals there could be only horrified repulsion or fascinated acceptance. The key of the riddle was never found; for it to be so English liberals would have to have had some confidence in themselves and their basic beliefs. But they were not the staunch liberals of the nineteenth century. They were crippled by their feeling that British democracy was breaking down, and torn between a dislike of all political institutions and an urge to try new ones.

There was, indeed, an element of disbelief in their attitude towards Fascism, consisting, for the most part, of the disbelief of reasonable men

what he calls a 'grasp on reality' is the purest fantasy. There was no reason at all why Britain should have had to 'become Fascist to win', nor did it do so.

¹ Harrod, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-8. Not many young men tried to follow Bloomsbury into its more arcane mysteries during these years. What happened when they did may be seen from Philip Toynbee's account of 'Beaumont Street', an Oxford set of the thirties heavily influenced by Bloomsbury. 'They were intellectuals, but I soon saw that their first principle was an almost harsh demand for *emotional* integrity. Friendship, for example, was never to be taken for granted, and all human relations were subjected to endless scrutiny and analysis.' *Friends Apart* (MacGibbon and Kee, 1954), p. 48. It is all just that much more ponderous and priggish.

when faced with the irrational. But there was also another nuance to it. In Christopher Isherwood's Berlin books, in many of Mr. Auden's poems, in *Lions and Shadows*—by far the best reminiscences of the period—there is an atmosphere of schoolboy conspiracy, which sometimes strikes a hysterical note. How exciting it all was! And what security one felt at being in a 'gang'! Viewed like this, Socialism simply seemed another school secret society—and if Jones Minor didn't join, he'd be for it when the revolution came! This rather melodramatic approach to politics may have been imprinted on the literary intellectuals of the thirties by the powerful personality of Mr. Auden, in whose poems a schoolboy destructiveness and a schoolboy stoicism claim a prominent emotional part. But one cannot help feeling that English intellectuals were playing with fire and loving it. This was the time when 'toughness' became a virtue for the least tough of men, and political action brought with it a comfortable sensation of 'being in it' with one's friends and all decent chaps against 'them', the enemy (in this case, the Fascists). It is difficult not to imagine that Cyril Connolly's 'theory of permanent adolescence' had something to do with it.¹

The political (and not only the political) utterances of the thirties show an optimism which, coming as they did after *Brave New World*, seems to betray a lack of self-criticism and even of self-awareness. Instead of 'reliable intuitions of the good' and concern for human relations there was political determinism and an unlimited trust in a fashionably progressive scientism. Eight years before Orwell denounced contemporary trends of Socialist utopianism as going towards 'a brain in a bottle' J. D. Bernal had been going one better by anticipating the evolution of mankind into several linked brains in a lobster. Eventually consciousness itself might disappear 'in a humanity that has become completely etherealized, losing the close-knit organism, becoming masses of atoms in space communicating by radiation and ultimately perhaps resolving itself entirely into light'.² This was a fairly imaginative exercise

¹ The threatening note which is so often found in the writing of the thirties can also be regarded as a milder English version of the brawling and bullying which formed so large a part of the stock-in-trade of the French Surrealists, but it remains true that the note struck is very like preparatory-school allusions to 'pay-day'—the schoolboy's *Götterdämmerung*.

² J. D. Bernal, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil: An Enquiry into the Future of the Three Enemies of the Rational Soul* (Kegan Paul, 1929), p. 57. The passage is quoted in Dr. Neal Wood's *Communism and British Intellectuals* (Gollancz, 1959), p. 139.

in science fiction, but such pipe-dreams did not seem strange at a time when Ritchie Calder could seriously propose the replacement of the House of Lords by 'A Senate of Scientists'.¹ Professor Bernal's optimism (if it can be called that) was reproduced elsewhere in the form of a blind confidence in the results of psychoanalysis, tractors, planning, hydro-electric power-stations and remedial therapy. Scientism seemed a good enough creed for the positivist republic in which philosophers were to be kings, and the Socialist philosopher's stone was to satisfy the desires of the masses. Even poetry suffered from the prevailing fads. C. Day Lewis deserted his normal agreeably Georgian vein for a bold, modern use of engineering imagery:

'Oh there's a mine of metal
Enough to make me rich
And build right over chaos
A cantilever bridge.'²

Auden, on the other hand, always given to nihilism, found his satisfaction in rusting turbines and derelict pitheads, placed for preference among the northern moors, where so much machinery went to wrack, so many mines were closed, during those years.

Optimism was accompanied by *Schadenfreude*. In comparison with the brave, white, new world of the Left Book Club, the old one was obviously hardly worth saving, and, since every step downhill was a step towards the regenerate society, why not welcome each fresh descent? In the columns of a paper such as the *New Statesman* lips were pursed with grim pleasure over the parlous state of parliamentary democracy, while the readiness of a man like Sir Stafford Cripps to believe that in the U.S.A. 'the race for power between Socialism or Communism and Fascism appears so unequal at the present time, that, short of some miracle, the triumph of Fascism must be expected' may be put down to ignorance of

¹ Neal Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 127. The fallacy that scientists are particularly well suited to the tasks of government and administration is slow to die. More recently Sir Charles Snow concluded a book, which had demonstrated with some thoroughness the fallibility of scientific advisers, by a pious wish to see more scientists in positions of power.

² C. Day Lewis, *Collected Poems* (Cape, 1954), p. 83. The most ludicrous line of poetry that I know from these years comes from a poet who sung 'the smiling whiskers of Stalin and Earl Browder', but it would be unfair to give his name.

American political conditions, but must also be attributed to a Puritanism verging on masochism which forbade belief in any comfortable prediction.¹

This rather curious gloating over the possible defeat of the liberal values which were their own was due as much as anything to a failure of nerve. The guilt complexes and consequent self-hatred which they had brought with them from a middle-class background—even two writers as different in character as Orwell and Stephen Spender are united in the same experience of being unable to play with the rough children down the street—were powerfully reinforced by intellectual preoccupations which included Marx and Freud. The historicism they learned from Marx included the lesson that liberal values were probably going under anyway and that it was little use to try to deflect the course of history, while Freud's analysis of motivation sapped any assurance that could have led to action and encouraged the view that revolt against one's father's ideas was as inevitable as revolt against one's father. The traditional wisdom of 'know yourself' was changed to 'know your own neuroses' with all the lack of self-confidence that such a position implies.

It was the distinction of this generation of intellectuals that they were defeated from the start. And, since the residual liberalism, which formed the basis of their beliefs, appeared as at once the symbol and the cause of that defeat, they tried to divest themselves of it in torment and self-disgust, to don the new hard armour of authoritarian principle which suited them so badly and which they were soon forced to put off for fear of suffocating. In them may be seen (indeed, they appeared in their own eyes) English versions of all those pathetic social democratic professors and publicists who were soon to be beaten, tortured, gassed or shot in the nape of the neck all over Europe. That they were defenceless was axiomatic despite a carefully cultivated toughness. Their tottering sense of values undermined by guilt and gentility would not let them say 'boo' to a goose, let alone to an embattled storm-trooper or Red Guard. So, though most of them denounced the atrocities of the times, they tended to do so with too many qualifications and backward glances at the juggernaut of history to give a total impression of candour. And these hesitations unfitted them for any sort of practical reforming action. A Victorian intellectual shocked by mass unemployment would have

¹ Quoted in Henry Pelling, *America and the British Left* (A. and C. Black, 1956), p. 143.

been up and about organizing soup kitchens, cottage industries and possibly a new political party. Arthur Hugh Clough addressing letters for Florence Nightingale has become rather a ridiculous figure thanks to Lytton Strachey, but the fact that he was doing effective social service should not be lost in a superior snigger. The intellectuals of the thirties were shocked by unemployment, but they did not do very much about it. Once again, lack of confidence paralysed them. How could they help the working classes without displaying middle-class superiority? From their point of view Spain provided a much more satisfactory field of action, since a Catalan militiaman or an Asturian could far more easily be romanticized and admired than a Lancashire cotton-worker or a Northumbrian ship-builder. Orwell was wrong: it is not the fact that people smell which makes contact difficult (he was misled here by his own Swiftian horror of dirt and the functions of the human body), but their use of a language which is the same as one's own, yet entirely different from it. In Spain there was no such barrier, and the Spanish revolution, with its picturesque detail under a bright sun, appealed to that element in the Englishman which is drawn into other people's quarrels, and which carried volunteers to the Greece of Phil-Hellenism or the Italy of the Risorgimento. The enthusiasm of English intellectuals for the Spanish struggle also represented an escape from work waiting to be done at home. It was very exactly the alienation of idealism.

The intellectuals of the thirties can be called the first of the ineffectual English liberals (a *persona* which has become more familiar since then), though this title might seem not to take into account their vociferous repudiation of liberal values. Indeed, had this public assumption of attitudes represented the depths of their personality, they might have taken their place in history as the first members of an English revolutionary intelligentsia. But they were liberals at heart, suspecting it as the source of their weakness and defeated by the resulting conflicts. Something of the same hesitation can be found in the Victorians torn between science and religion (much thirties writing on the theme of the intellectual and the working classes strikes the same agonized, yet indecisive note as is found in, say, *In Memoriam*), but the loss of confidence in their own deepest values and in their task as intellectuals was something new. Even Bloomsbury had not gone that far, though its super-civilized wastage of liberal ideals and its failure to consider the legitimate rights of the collectivity (E. M. Forster's antithesis between friend and country can

now be seen as an oversimplification) had made resistance to any crude totalitarian messianism far harder. With their lack of confidence the generation of the thirties was placed in an impossible position. For by refusing to play their part as an élite with solutions to offer the mass of their fellow countrymen, they condemned themselves to a permanent incapacity to help those for whose plight they had felt responsible. No intellectual adept of *Proletkult* ever did anything to advance the condition of the working classes. Contrary to what is often said (most recently by Raymond Williams)¹ it is only by adopting a 'dominative' attitude that intellectuals can do their duty by the society to which they belong. The intellectuals of the thirties may have wished for power in their heart of hearts, but they were neither willing nor able to provide leadership in a bourgeois Britain. The Fabians, with their rather chilly assurance, laid the foundations of the Welfare State. The Left Book Club bequeathed a literature of remorse.

Some of those who lived the spiritual crises of the thirties sought to give themselves an air of decisiveness by joining the Communist Party (much as a man might join the army in order to avoid having to decide at what hour to get up and take his meals), but this did not usually last long, and their record of intellectual honesty, once they saw what they were in for, is respectable. The gravamen of the charge against the intellectuals of the thirties is not their relationship with the party but their failure to distinguish the consequences of their status as intellectuals and their unwillingness to bear the spiritual burdens it imposed. They have left us their doubts and disappointments as a legacy, and, though they sold no passes consciously, their defence of threatened bastions was desultory and ineffective.

But I should not wish to end this account of the thirties on a harsh note. Indeed, it would be blindly priggish to do so. For, while we know that some people might have done better than they (Orwell did do better),

¹ In *The Long Revolution* (Chatto and Windus, 1961) Mr. Williams carries his dislike of 'domination' to unholy lengths. 'The true process of democratic decision is that, with all the facts made available, the question is openly discussed and its resolution openly arrived at, either by a simple majority vote or by a series of voluntary changes to arrive at a consensus. The skills of the good listener and the clarifier are indeed exceptionally necessary in such a process, but these are crucially different from the stance of the leader who is merely listening to the discussion to discover the terms in which he can get his own way.' (p. 307.) I find myself wondering whether Mr. Williams has ever attended a committee meeting and, if so, how it ever came to an end.

it is also probable that most of us would have made the same mistakes if placed in the same position. This was a generation of transition, the last to be born into an England that was safe, the first to see that safety seriously threatened. An effort of adaptation was required of them which, not unnaturally, they were unable to furnish. Previous intellectuals had not been confronted with a mixture of Fascism abroad and unemployment at home or with the temptations of a creed that seemed to offer all the answers as well as providing an outlet for their own psychological pressures. Later there would be a more realistic but also more limited attempt to come to terms with an unsafe world. In the meantime the intellectuals of the thirties were faced with a situation which they only analysed in the vaguest terms and which they could not master. And while their struggles in an unfamiliar environment might produce good literature, it did not provide a basis for social or political action. There is some injustice in considering them without their real achievements in literature, science and philosophy, but, since they insisted on what would nowadays be called their 'commitment', the misunderstanding is of their own making. After the war it seemed essential to a new generation to be unfair to the thirties.

INTELLECTUALS AND THE WAR

During the war English intellectual life was interrupted. That is, the general evolution of ideas was suspended or superseded by waves of official sentiment. Intellectuals became people who sent messages to captive Europe, or worked in ministries and the forces, or broadcast robust postscripts for the B.B.C. The occupations of war, in fact, went a long way towards silencing what can now dimly be discerned as an early reaction against the thirties. People had no time to write and hardly the time to think, an exercise which in any case demanded a high degree of mental toughness between 1940 and 1945. A generation which might have had its own distinctive voice achieved only a fragmentary expression, confronting the rationalism and optimism of the thirties with a more religious, not to say apocalyptic, view of life. Of course, this was also the period in which the ideas of the thirties attained their widest diffusion, often achieving the status of an orthodoxy which it was heretical or defeatist to doubt. Phrases which at their best had been original and sincerely held were now churned out (quite as sincerely) by politicians

and officials of the Ministry of Information as an encouragement to those doing the fighting and the labouring. 'A Better World', 'The Four Freedoms', 'The Century of the Common Man'—how sick one became of all those slogans endlessly repeated over the wireless, in the newspapers, on platforms. During the early forties the already ambivalent ideals of the previous decade were transformed into carrots to be dangled in front of our noses. If, in one sense, the war years saw the apotheosis of the thirties carried to a commanding position on a wave of common effort and social idealism, on the other this process in itself excited criticism of them. The intellectual basis of the Labour victory of 1945 was sapped before ever the election was won.

The reaction was aided by the silence of most of those voices which had been heard in past years. At the time Orwell seemed to be the only survivor of the thirties to have stuck to his rather idiosyncratic guns. Many of the others appeared to resemble the master in *Eric, or Little by Little*, who at moments of crisis was to be found on his knees in the school library. In their absence there were symptoms of a new fashion. It is probably significant that Jung rather than Freud should have enjoyed a vogue at this time, and that Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History*, with its emphasis on the religious inspiration of civilization, should have received such attention. It is, of course, not in the least surprising that a war should have brought some return to religion (or religiosity) on the part of intellectuals, and it is remarkably appropriate that the great literary work of the period should have been T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. For this remained a minority movement, which may have affected the very young more than it affected anyone else and which, in any case, was felt as conveying the inadequacy of the oversimplifications of the thirties rather than any more positive message. What survived was a lyricism seen at its best in the work of Dylan Thomas and at its worst in various poets of the New Apocalypse school. There was also a literature of nostalgia, of which (as Evelyn Waugh has himself recognized in his preface to a revised edition) *Brideshead Revisited* was the palmary example, redolent of food and drink and great houses.¹

¹ Mr. Wain in a chapter of his autobiography, which he kindly let me see before publication, points out that at this time the atmosphere at Oxford was strongly Christian—largely due to the influence of such teachers as C. S. Lewis and the late Charles Williams. I certainly remember a general feeling that the fallacies of rationalism and 'progressive thinking' had been exploded, but I fancy that what was gained by students was more an increase of disbelief than any positive creed.

A more strikingly obvious change was to be seen in the political activities of intellectuals. It is true that the German invasion of Russia in 1941 permitted those who had always kow-towed in the direction of Moscow to do so with a clearer conscience and to the accompaniment of a variety of patriotic cries. Unfavourable comparisons could be drawn between the British and the Soviet war effort, and much solace derived from slogans such as 'Start a Second Front Now', chalked on walls by those who were in no particular danger of having to lead the first wave on the beaches. But not many intellectuals could be mustered for these invigorating tasks: the Russo-German pact had changed all that. Perhaps the most important political development of the war was the acceptance by public opinion and the government of the principle of the Welfare State and of an economy protected by Keynesian methods from the excesses of boom and slump. The most positive measures to emerge from a chaos of expediency were the promise of full employment (the recognition of how impossible it was to ask soldiers to return to live on the dole), the Beveridge Report and a new Education Act. Like all wars which demand effort and sacrifices from the inhabitants of modern democracies, this one saw an accelerated impulse towards a more just and more egalitarian society. The opposition of the English left to Nazi-ism, the policies of appeasement carried out by the Conservatives before 1939, the intellectual offensive of the thirties—all these influences converged to present Socialism as the ideology of victory, the cause for which the struggle was carried on and the shining reward which would attend its successful completion. The intellectuals, however, were silent while their ideas swept all before them. Perhaps they had already passed to the stage at which their political dogmas seemed crude and mechanical or else they were not interested in reform carried out by Parliament without any of the exciting accessories of revolution, at which they had gazed from afar during the years of peace.

Yet there was something else too. There had been a profound change, and Mr. Toynbee suggests something of its nature when he writes of a meeting with his friend Esmond Romilly in the autumn of 1941:

'In spite of his social opposition to distinctions of rank and in spite of his political assiduities, he wasn't "against" the air force as he had been against the public schools and the upper classes. When he passed high-ranking officers he saluted them, although he derided the

principle of saluting. In fact, for the second time in his life . . . Esmond had been voluntarily caught up in a machine and was serving as a cog in it without defiance. This wasn't a change of heart or spirit, as his social and political attitudes sufficiently showed, but it was a practical recognition of the irrelevance, in these circumstances, of the old standard of revolt for the sake of revolt.¹

It might perhaps be thought that 'a practical recognition of the irrelevance . . . of the old standard of revolt for the sake of revolt' is simply one way of describing that greater maturity which should come with age, and something in this transformation can surely be attributed to the process of growing up. But there was more to it than that. For English intellectuals the war supplied an integration into, and a possibility of service towards, a society for whose misdemeanours they had held themselves responsible by reason of their class status, but which, for the very same reason, they had hitherto been powerless to help. On the outbreak of war they had to become involved, whether they liked it or not (and many of them liked it very much²), and, once they were involved, the normal patriotic attitudes of the liberal Englishman (his basic chauvinism, even) reasserted themselves. The war saw the reintegration of the English intellectual into a national structure, from which he had never been as dissociated as he would have liked to pretend, but where he had existed for a number of years in a sort of limbo of guilt and self-consciousness far from the areas where policies could be made or decisions taken.

POST-WAR GENERATION

In speaking of the processes which led me to write this book, I have already touched upon some of the *motifs* which preoccupied the immediate post-war generation of intellectuals, those who reached the age of twenty-one between 1940 and 1950. But my own experience was not entirely typical, and I wish now to give a less subjective account even at the risk of some repetition. Such an attempt to analyse one's own contemporaries is bound to be partial enough, however sincere the attempt to avoid

¹ Philip Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

² It is significant that this last war has produced no literature of disgust on the part of intellectuals returning from the front line. The only theatre of operations which stimulated emotions comparable to those expressed by numerous writers after the 1914-18 war was the American campaign in the Pacific.

obvious prejudices. My excuse is that nobody else has written of my generation except in the crude slogans of popular journalism. Divided from its predecessors by the chasm of war, and from those who came after it by their failure to remember that catastrophic experience, it has been left to the mercy of idiotic generalizations diffused by the machinery of modern publicity. I would wish to do something to set the record straight and to place in a clearer light attitudes of mind which are interesting and significant for the intellectual development of this country.

It seems to me, then, that the most central attitude of the post-war generation was a kind of wary radicalism, a stance on the left, but not too far on the left. The devaluation of progressive ideas, which I have mentioned above, had affected us, but so had the prevailing wartime hopes of a better world and higher standards of living for all. Believing in the necessity of a Labour Government, a Welfare State, independence for India, we none the less had few illusions about the possibility of their leading to a new heaven and a new earth. Political acts seemed necessary and could be supported, even fought for; political programmes were regarded with scepticism. It was a flight from idealism towards an empiricism which was the more welcome in that ideology had visibly proved itself to be the curse of the twentieth century. Between 1945 and 1950 it was all too evident that nothing very ideal was going to happen, but that if a sort of H.C.F. of decent behaviour and tolerable living could be established that would be enough to be going on with. How much could be achieved was doubtful (there was not much belief in the efficacy of politics as an instrument of betterment), but the attempt had to be made—primarily for reasons which were moral, however they might be put. Let us say that we were in earnest about doing good but were distrustful of ‘do-gooders’¹ and their nostrums. Sweeping dogmatisms which claimed to have an infallible solution to the world’s problems were excluded. The consequences of relaxing with a happy sigh into the arms of Moscow or Rome were by now all too plainly visible. We braced ourselves to be content with the possible, limiting our aims and, at the same time, the damage we might have to do to attain them. In a sense—and this sounds a little priggish in retrospect—the

¹ A study of the word ‘do-gooder’ would be of great interest. It certainly has part of its origins in the attitudes which I am describing, but it has also acquired a stronger content of disbelief in philanthropy, whether private or state-organized, which may stem from impatience with a certain dictatorial fussiness, which is one of the less agreeable characteristics of the Welfare State.

adoption of a creed, political or religious, would have seemed too easy a way out. We were a generation of agnostics: neither optimists nor pessimists but sceptics. Zeal was not at all our line. Humanity, we would have liked to think, was—and also common sense.

If this readiness to be content with small gains made itself felt in the political field it was still more evident in that of everyday life. In 1945 and 1946 the requirements of young intellectuals were not very great. To someone who had been fourteen or fifteen at the outbreak of war rationing and the general shabbiness, which had been left over from the struggle, were things that seemed almost normal—certainly not matters which justified complaints and attacks on the Labour Government. There was a strong feeling that the best had better be made of things, and if this included doing without country houses and travel abroad then that was too bad. This state of mind, often allied to an innate Puritanism, forbade the nostalgia which carried upper-class emigrants to Ireland or Kenya. Of course, there was something of sour grapes about these reactions. If we denounced 'gracious living' it was partly because we were making the best of an absence of luxury. If England and the English provinces were proclaimed as the only places to live it was because we had been cut off from travel and currency regulations made living elsewhere difficult. A great deal of post-war literature has been concerned with producing this sort of mythical virtue out of necessity, with pretending that Birmingham is as interesting a place to inhabit as Berlin or that the amenities of Manchester compare with those of Milan. For a novelist this can take the form of a praiseworthy preoccupation with the material around him, but the attitude in itself becomes narrow and banal after a while. The lack of knowledge of foreign languages and literatures among our generation might be excused by circumstance but was nothing whatever to be proud of.

Still, having come through a great catastrophe, convinced of the culpability of the 'governing' classes in letting it take place, it was a little irritating to hear constant moaning about the lack of good wine and the bad manners of shop assistants, and all the more so in that those middle-class British tourists, who, in France and other countries, complained about English conditions, were totally ignorant of what a galloping black market implied in the shape of profiteering and undernourished children.

No doubt we should have been hostile to the upper-class pieties of

English life even without the austere circumstances of a post-war era to incite us. A certain amount has been written about the post-war generation of intellectuals representing strata of English society whose point of view had not previously invaded cultural life. Many analysts have presented us with the picture of the clumsy graduate from Redbrick with Manchester or Nottingham mud on his boots and resentment in his heart crashing into the prim upper-class parlours where English intellectuals had been accustomed to gather, knocking over ornaments and stubbing out cigarette-ends on the floor to the terror and affright of the assembled aesthetes. It was not quite like that.

The spirit of the time played at least as much part as class structures in forming post-war intellectuals (many of them, in fact, came from the upper middle classes), and it was probably more significant that so many of them went to Oxford or Cambridge than that a few went to universities in the provinces. Their attitudes were formed partly as a result of circumstances around them—the years of war and recovery—and also to a very considerable extent as a reaction to what had gone before. The tough English pragmatism to which we aspired (with some emphasis on the word ‘tough’) was particularly destructive of the thirties. Feeling less vulnerable ourselves, we had little sympathy for their carefully arranged vulnerability. Why not show some common sense about the Soviet Union? Why worry about one’s neuroses? Why feel guilt for things (British imperialism, unemployment) for which one was not responsible? Why not get on with it and write (or paint or research or compose music)? To their reticences we opposed an honesty that insisted upon having its say and was often more candid than kind. There was, I think, a feeling that, so far as one’s friends were concerned, they ought to be able to put up with hearing home truths and more especially home truths about their work. In fact, of course, most of our home truths were reserved for those who had preceded us.¹

Fundamentally, much of this protest against the thirties was directed against an intellectual leadership which was felt in some obscure way to have let us down. To anyone who grew up during the war (and here I speak from personal experience) it was a bitter disappointment to find only silence and impotence in writers to whom he had looked for

¹ A distinct change in the tone of book reviewing began to be noticeable about 1953–4 as this new generation hit the literary reviews. There really was some speaking-out, which at first was courageous but later became a manner.

something which it is not too exaggerated to call 'help'. An inadequate handling of ideas, an inadequate control of emotions, had taken them far from reality and seemed to have made them incapable of any creative reaction when that reality was forced on them in the shape of war. By 1940 the thirties were no longer relevant. But something, anything, was needed which this group of intellectuals could not give, and their failure to provide it was not to be pardoned. The accusation of 'treason of the clerks' is possibly unjust when brought against them (perhaps it is always unjust), but it was inevitable that it should be made by those who had in a real sense suffered from their lack of an adequate reaction at a crucial moment in history. Nor could this want be filled by those voices most fashionable during the forties. To young intellectuals during and immediately after the war neither Edith Sitwell nor Christopher Fry seemed voices of their time as they were described in the Sunday papers. To tell the truth, they hardly seemed voices at all.

F. R. LEAVIS AND *SCRUTINY*

These tendencies during the late forties were reinforced by the two most powerful intellectual influences of the time: F. R. Leavis and his review *Scrutiny* and George Orwell. Of course, logical positivism is also to be found hovering in the background of the blunt reasonableness which became the prevailing tone, but its effect was more often felt at second- or third-hand than as the result of a systematic acquaintance with the works of these philosophers.¹ One aspect of Orwell in such essays as 'Politics and the English Language' or 'Notes on Nationalism' is his role as the great popularizer of logical positivism.

The effect of *Scrutiny* was threefold. First, it made its appeal by means of a concentrated moral seriousness conveyed through the medium of a literary criticism, which found Bloomsbury superficial and the men of the thirties pip-squeaks. Secondly, it connected literature with English

¹ I think that here generalization is dangerous. For one thing, there were considerable differences between universities and between disciplines. Obviously, anyone reading English literature was more likely to have been affected by *Scrutiny* than someone reading history or learning to paint. But I none the less believe its influence to have been widespread and profound over a large area of English intellectual life. Dr. Leavis seems to have been one of the rare contemporary examples of a teacher conveying a view of life to his pupils, a break with which entailed an intellectual crisis of nineteenth-century dimensions. The word 'Leavisite' is not an empty one.

culture and English history taken as a whole. Long before the present fuss about the effects of mass-media on culture *Scrutiny* had concerned itself with the question, and the debate is still largely carried on in terms laid down in such books as *Culture and Environment* (1933) or *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932). Thirdly, *Scrutiny* and its creator were hostile to shams and pretentiousness, deeply devoted to the radical, non-conformist tradition in English life and convinced that the greatness of English literature (in particular of the novel) was closely connected with that tradition as it developed in the English provinces.

In the pages of *Scrutiny* Matthew Arnold's high seriousness came into its own again. At its best the attitude was one of religious radicalism, but a radicalism which would have nothing to do with foreign dogmas such as Roman Catholicism or Communism. At its worst (and particularly when assumed by some of the *epiginoi* of *Scrutiny*) it could degenerate into a humourless priggishness, which was not made any better by the sometimes acrid controversial style in which it was put forward. In general, however, Dr. Leavis and his review represented throughout the thirties a fighting return of liberal values against the dilettante totalitarianism which was fashionable at the time. At the back of *Scrutiny* there was a genuine concern for freedom of thought and for standards of thought.¹ Incidentally, there was also some sound common sense. About such subjects as the class system the *Scrutiny* group tended to adopt the sensible attitude of one of its heroes, D. H. Lawrence: that *proletkult* is just as insulting to the working classes as its opposite.

Scrutiny, then, stood for a serious liberalism. Flippancy was the only thing about which it was prepared to be thoroughly illiberal, and, consequently, quite a number of butterflies were broken upon its wheels. The lesson was one in ethics, a modern morality of feeling conveyed for the most part through literary criticism, to which it often gave what might seem to be an excessively severe and forbidding air. But Dr. Leavis's aim was something vaster than the reformation of English literary criticism. It was an 'attempt to establish a real liberal education in this country—to restore in relation to the modern world the idea of liberal education',² and it should be admitted that the movement which

¹ It is a sign of how deeply *Scrutiny* has affected us that it is very hard to write about it without using its own vocabulary. 'Standards', 'genuine concern', 'values', 'awareness', 'discrimination'—they are all part of a common stock now.

² F. R. Leavis, *Education and the University* (Chatto and Windus, 1943), p. 18.

had him for its inspirer has been the one continuous effort to tackle this task which we have seen. That it should have been carried on through the medium of the study of English literature is comprehensible if we assign to our language the primary cultural role which belongs to it and which is maintained and continued by a vigilant minority.¹ For *Scrutiny* English literature had the same importance as a vehicle of civilization as the classical literatures had for a Renaissance humanist, in whose eyes a false quantity implied not only an error in taste or lack of ability but a real regression towards barbarism. Hence a ruthless, Puritanical exclusion of anything considered as failing to live up to or actively damaging the ideal. *Porro unum est necessarium*. Here Dr. Leavis could echo Matthew Arnold, and if his concern for the one thing needful from time to time led him to an excessive rigour of judgement, he never undervalued literature or treated it as less than the living stream of a civilization, always menaced and always to be saved by individual exertion.

Those who concern themselves with literature (and not only they) owe a debt of gratitude to *Scrutiny*, which should lead them to excuse some errors and excesses. Even the repeated moral disapproval directed against the culture of the metropolis was useful, since it drew attention to the glib cult of fashion, to the official reputations and their lack of any just foundation, to the unwillingness of critics to speak out. In fact, it reiterated a view of London literary life which had been put forward at intervals since the eighteenth century.² And when it pointed out that Philistinism can take the form of the superficial acceptance, and the, so to

¹ 'Upon this minority depends our power of profiting by the finest human experience of the past; they keep alive the subtlest and most perishable parts of tradition. . . . In their keeping . . . is the language, the changing idiom, upon which fine living depends, and without which distinction of spirit is thwarted and incoherent. By "culture" I mean the use of such a language.' F. R. Leavis, *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture* (Minority Pamphlets No. 1, Gordon Fraser, Cambridge, 1930), p. 5. I hope I am not alone in considering this one of the noblest expressions a certain ideal of the intellectual life has received—so much simpler, so much more cogent, than most of what has been written since on the subject.

² It is curious to note how much of *Scrutiny's* dislike of 'metropolitan culture' echoes a similar prejudice on the part of Mr. Gladstone. 'Looking over all the great achievements that have made the last half century illustrious, not one of them would have been effected if the opinions of the West End of London had prevailed.' (Speech delivered on May 7th, 1877, quoted in Philip Magnus's *Gladstone* (John Murray, 1954), p. 247.) Such a comparison does something to situate *Scrutiny's* position. When the review ceased publication there were published in the *Spectator* letters from teachers in South African universities which bore witness to the help it had afforded them in defending liberal values under overwhelming attack.

speech, digestion of cultural values, *Scrutiny* was doing an immense and original service. All the present talk of the 'Establishment' owes everything to Dr. Leavis, and no better illustration of this rather vague concept has ever been given than his notice of Sir Roy Harrod's *Life of John Maynard Keynes* in the last volume of the review.

ORWELL

Then there was Orwell. His influence on the post-1945 generation was very great, but there has been a certain amount of dispute about its nature. He has been accused of permitting his obsessions to run away with him in a book like *1984* to the extent of appearing a 'right-wing propagandist by negation, or at any rate a supremely powerful—though unconscious—advocate of political quietism'.¹ I myself believe this view of his influence to be mistaken or rather to put the emphasis in the wrong place. For all its invention of the word *Ingsoc* and its use of the drabness of post-war Britain as a background *1984* is fundamentally a protest against the increasing power of the bureaucratic state, always threatening to become an end in itself and using ideologies for that purpose after having emptied them of their living content. Now such a protest seems to me an entirely reasonable one for an English Socialist to make and in many respects more in the tradition of the British Labour movement than the state Socialism whose dangers it is concerned to point out. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* Orwell was far and away the most powerful advocate of a fair deal for the British working classes, just as (in *Homage to Catalonia*) he was the most persuasive advocate for the Spanish Republic simply because he was at the same time sharply critical of left-wing sophistries and sophistications. If political indifference spread among young intellectuals after the war it was not so much because of what they read in Orwell as because of what they read in the newspapers. They did not so much follow his lead as pass through an analogous process of disillusionment. The bloom was off certain types of political ideal before ever *1984* or *Animal Farm* were written.

Among English intellectuals Orwell's essays and such books as *The Road to Wigan Pier* were far more influential than his political satires. What they found in them was, in the first instance, a vindication of

¹ Kingsley Amis, *Socialism and the Intellectuals* (Fabian Tract 304, London, 1957), p. 8.

specifically English values and a criticism of society which was based on English realities. For the first time, after all the social criticism that had gone before, Orwell presented his readers with a picture of their country which was immediately recognizable in outline and in detail, and which imposed itself on them as a new vision of what they had always known. Orwell's England was quite clearly the eccentric, kindly, blackened country we all inhabit. Its people were liable to spend more time in pubs than in adult extension classes and to be more interested in the success of football teams than in the failure of the capitalist system. But this did not exclude a practical turn for self-improvement or a smouldering resentment at the plight to which the depression had reduced them. This was a description of the home of Mr. Micawber as well as that of Mr. Pickwick, of Bill Sykes as well as of Sam Weller. Even Orwell's desire to identify himself with the working classes, which was his weakest point, did not prevent him from describing them rather more effectively than Dickens. The England which we find in his essays is a real world and because it is a real world it is capable of real reform. However desolating Orwell's picture of a northern slum may be, one never feels on reading it that the only solution is some kind of violent revolutionary cleansing. Behind the squalor there exist qualities rooted in tradition which would be destroyed by any historical cataclysm. Orwell valued these qualities, and if that is to be a Conservative then he was a Conservative in that sense. But in that case he must share the title with those members of the British Labour movement who have desired reform and not revolution. Like them, he esteemed the English working classes for what they were and not for what they might become.

Another side of Orwell's influence consisted in his manner of saying things. As Mr. Amis writes, 'No modern writer has his air of passionately believing what he has to say and of being passionately determined to say it as forcefully and simply as possible.'¹ That manner of the plain, blunt man putting things in one-syllable and sometimes in four-letter words, that gruff humanity so hostile to cant and evasion, had far greater effects than any of the obsessions (with the working class, the police or the bodily functions). The 'no nonsense' air of an entire generation comes from Orwell. Anyone brought up on his works will try to say what he means as directly as possible, and what he means will often sound less than urbane. As he himself used it, this style had the advantage of bringing

¹ Ibid., p. 8.

the argument round from 'political necessity' to some poor devil being shot in the back of the neck. And this determination to expose what lay behind abstraction was the same as that of early English Socialists protesting against the 'iron law' or a 'free market' in the name of a human reality. If Orwell was not a radical he was nothing. If, as it is fashionable to say, he was not a Socialist, so much the worse for Socialism. He stands as the last in a long line of English moralists whose judgements have more usually been applied to the living humanity embodied in the condition-of-England question than to any critique of ethical philosophy. Personally, I always think of him as he thought of Dickens: 'The face of a man who is always fighting against something, but who fights in the open and is not frightened, the face of a man who is *generously angry*—in other words, of a nineteenth-century liberal, a free intelligence.'¹ The tribute is banal by this time, but I cannot imagine failing to pay it here.

Reinforced by the influence of these masters the keynote of the late forties and early fifties was a kind of hard reasonableness which was equally suspicious both of fanaticism and of fantasy and found no reason to rebel against a society which had shown that it could be improved. With non-conformist masochism young intellectuals portrayed themselves as living in a small hell of stale tinned food and undried babies' napkins, thereby affirming their freedom from metropolitan luxury and cosmopolitan snobbery, but they were not prepared to take up arms or even pen and paper to move out of it. As I have already hinted, these attitudes were a way of making the best of things at a time when they were really difficult and should not therefore be taken too literally. But the common-sense, down-to-earth approach of English intellectuals in the years following the war did imply a limitation of aims in every field, from politics to poetry, which was not carried through without jettisoning some valuable cargo. Something, I feel, was lost by my generation. Perhaps we played too safe, were too concerned not to be criticized for romantic excess or sentimental nostalgia. Perhaps the something was youth, but that was probably past praying for in the years between 1939 and 1950. In any case, what *malaise* we felt was suppressed. For the moment we were reasonably gay and rationally cynical.

Indeed, for some years after the war most English intellectuals were reconciled to an astonishing degree with the society in which they lived.

¹ George Orwell, *Critical Essays* (Secker and Warburg, 1946), pp. 59-60.

A good American observer, Professor Edward Shils, went so far as to write in 1955:

'There are complaints here and there and on many specific issues, but—in the main—scarcely anyone in Great Britain seems any longer to feel that there is anything fundamentally wrong. On the contrary, Great Britain on the whole, and especially in comparison with other countries, seems to the British intellectual of the mid-1950s to be fundamentally all right and even much more than that. Never has an intellectual class found its society and its culture so much to its satisfaction.'¹

At that time it seemed that Britain had a small but evident moral lead over Europe (and perhaps over America too) and that it was very irritating of Europeans not to admit it. Orderly Britain, where there were 'fair shares' for all and the Chancellor of the Exchequer went to work by Tube, appeared far superior to an anarchic France or a guilty Germany. The greatest temptation of an Englishman is to moral superiority, and it was hard not to indulge it.²

Of course we were wrong. Not so much in esteeming the fairness and real civic sense which prevailed in the Britain of the Labour Government as in failing to see the other side of the picture. I have described the vague feeling which grew upon me during these years that something might be wrong, but, since I was living abroad, it was easier to distinguish symptoms, and, as I have already said, I too felt a complacency about the state of England which I now realize to have been excessive. At home the grumbling of the young intellectuals, if grumbling there was (about the inconveniences of life in post-war Britain, high taxation, low salaries, etc.) was more in the nature of the grouching of soldiers serving in an army, whose fundamental purposes they approve, than a 'revolt'. Though Britain's loss of power in the world was quite evident even at an

¹ Edward Shils, 'The Intellectuals: (i) Great Britain', *Encounter* 19 (April 1955), p. 6. The reasons given by Professor Shils for these feelings were the solidarity engendered by the war, the Labour Government with its Welfare State and liberal colonial policies, the contrast between Britain and the Continent or America, the disappearance of Socialist ideology.

² It was in this mood that the late Aneurin Bevan could say: 'There is only one hope for mankind, and that hope still remains in this little island'—a sentiment mankind, regrettably, has so far failed to echo. I need hardly say that the Welsh are as prone to this particular vice as we are.

early stage after the war, and it might have been conjectured that moral euphoria represented an over-compensation rather than a seeing of ourselves as others saw us, the point was not taken intellectually or emotionally. As for possible disagreeable consequences of the Welfare State, they were hardly visible as yet, and the issue was confused by the belief that the battle was still on against those few reactionaries who were bitterly opposed to the very idea of welfare. In 1950 the reconciliation of the intellectual and English society appeared to be complete and lasting, the one offering a tolerable image of decency and good management, the other being prepared to put up with a vegetable diet of liberal progress and to do without the spicy ideologies of the years before the war.

It was this pact that came to an end with *Declaration* and the more general outburst of social criticism that took place from 1957 onwards. During these years the results, first of Britain's decline in world power, and, secondly, of social developments following on the establishment of the Welfare State, began to throw a strain on the liberal assumptions which assented to the one and took pride in the other. And that strain was all the greater in that the sympathies, to which liberal opinions gave rise, tended either to conceal its very existence or else to mask its true nature from would-be analysts. Hence the anger and frustration which now began to appear in English intellectual life, and whose deeper causes must now be traced.

POWER ON THE WANE

Whatever . . . the English may think, I have a conviction that there is a real, an almost imminent danger of England losing immeasurably in all ways, declining into a sort of greater Holland, for want of what I must still call ideas, for want of perceiving how the world is going and must go, and preparing herself accordingly. This conviction haunts me, and at times even overwhelms me with depression; I would rather not live to see the change come to pass, for we shall all deteriorate under it.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

England is shortsighted. Ultimately she will be pressed out between Russia and the United States, as she has no allies.

KAISER WILHELM II

The main fact governing English life since 1939—a fact so obvious that it is frequently overlooked altogether—is loss of power. Great Britain entered the Second World War of its own free will—morally compelled by Hitler, it is true, but nevertheless as an independent foreign-policy decision—and took with it overseas possessions which were then at the most extensive they had ever been. Six years later it emerged from an exhausting struggle as the weakest member of a world triumvirate. The last months of the struggle saw the more realistic British view of the conditions that were likely to prevail after victory powerless to bring American optimism down to earth or to deflect the stealthy pursuit of self-interest which was Stalin's interpretation of an alliance. After 1945 things were worse. With empty currency reserves, an empire demanding self-government and the world contested between two powers whose home territory was continental in scale and whose populations were numbered in hundreds, instead of tens, of millions, it was obvious that

Britain's activities in the world would in future be dwarfed, and that, though statesmen might flatter themselves with a permanent seat on the Security Council of the United Nations and a place at any meeting of the 'Big Three' or 'Four', the brutal reality was that some countries were very much 'bigger' than others.

The field where this uncomfortable truth became most immediately evident was that of defence. As Machiavelli pointed out a long time ago, the acid test of a country's freedom of action lies in its ability to defend itself when attacked, and it was clear soon after 1945 that Great Britain could not resist an attack from Russia without the help of the U.S.A. With Soviet development of more and more effective nuclear weapons and longer and longer range rockets to deliver them, British military theorists were gradually forced back into the awkward position of the 1957 White Paper on Defence: 'It must be frankly recognized that there is at present no means of providing adequate protection for the people of this country against the consequences of an attack with nuclear weapons.'¹ Even the supreme resource of British history, a retreat behind the moat of the Channel, was of no use now, however heroically effective it had been in 1940, and British defence preparations evolved into something half-way between an interlocking section of N.A.T.O. and a financially extravagant striking force designed to ensure that no attack on this country could be delivered without involving a general war. Without America we could not hope to defend ourselves; with America we should probably be devastated anyway; but we could at least make certain that in a game of nuclear blackmail the blackmailer would run the risk of devastation too. In Western Europe this was the 'trip-wire' conception of the part to be played by the Atlantic Alliance, which has worked well enough up to the moment when American territory is directly threatened by Russian nuclear missiles. (Whether it will continue to work after that remains to be seen. Certainly there is an implicit risk to Western Europe in the equation which must be present in the mind of every American statesman and where the consequences of a nuclear bombardment of the U.S.A. are measured against the value to American foreign policy of positions of strength overseas.)

However this may be, for Britain a changed military situation was a measure of its decline in power, a striking diminution which was to

¹ Quoted, C. M. Woodhouse, *British Foreign Policy since the Second World War* (Hutchinson, 1961), p. 85.

bring in its train the overthrow of traditional ideas of British interests and influence in the world. Some of the consequences of the revolution which had taken place in six years were realized relatively quickly by those in control of the country's policies. Accepting Britain's loss of power, they soon came round to what was, at the time, the probably correct idea that the maximum influence in world politics could be exerted by taking on the role of America's most loyal ally and, if need be, of her wisest and most friendly critic. This was nothing particularly new. Ever since the Venezuelan crisis of 1902 it had been a dogma of British foreign policy that nothing should be done to offend the U.S.A., and from there to basing policy on an Anglo-American alliance, with Britain as the junior partner, was only a step. After 1945 such a pact seemed merely the continuation of an arrangement to which the war had accustomed us, and which carried with it the comforting sense of reassurance it had acquired in 1941. Moreover, the momentary disappearance as forces on the international scene of the countries of Western Europe gave a cosy feeling of exclusiveness to the Anglo-American association. Britain's 'special position' with America was an article of faith which was sometimes interpreted to mean that in Washington we could get away with more than any other European country and sometimes took on the rather disagreeable tone of a civilized but enfeebled Greece 'handing on the torch' to a capable but brutal Rome.

In other fields, however, there was less comprehension of the changed facts of national life. British policy in the Middle East is a case in point. The granting of independence to India and Pakistan took away both the basis for and the *raison d'être* of British suzerainty in that area, since the function of this had been to secure the route to India and its maintenance secured by a numerous Indian army a few days' steaming distance from Basra.¹ But from Palestine to Egypt to Cyprus, up to 1956 and beyond, successive British governments continued to behave as though there were still a Viceroy in New Delhi and as if President Nasser were Arabi Pasha.

¹ It is difficult to determine the exact point at which strategic considerations began to dictate the course of British policy in Egypt. As long as the Ottoman Empire was in being, Great Britain's strategic interests were secured by the "neutralization" of Egypt and the Levant. But in the event of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire it was necessary for Great Britain that she should not find her communications with India menaced by a French occupation of the Levant unaccompanied by a British occupation of Egypt.' John Marlowe, *Anglo-Egyptian Relations: 1800-1953* (Cresset Press, 1954), p. 253.

The oil-fields of the Middle East provided an easy rationalization for the traditional idea that we must keep some kind of control over that area, though it is not clear why trade in this particular commodity should have to be protected by military bases any more than that in, say, Argentine beef or Indian tea. The emotions appealed to, however, were the ones which had always been stirred by the idea of a threat to the Indian life-line, and even oil with its strategic overtones (the fleet, the air force) was calculated to call into action reflexes conditioned by an earlier age. Clearly, all this was a hangover from secular ideas of what British foreign policy should be, a hangover affecting men whose political thinking had been formed well before the outbreak of the Second World War.¹

This kind of failure in adaptation to altered conditions has been by no means the prerogative of one political party or of one political tendency within a party. A politician on the left of the Labour Party who wishes to 'go it alone' and assert 'British leadership in the world' by conducting a semi-neutralist foreign policy without other allies than those to be found at Bandoeng or Belgrade is making the same mistake about Britain's actual power as his Conservative opposite number who favoured independent action against Dr. Mossadeq or President Nasser. Hence some rather curious meetings of minds on such terrains as dislike of Dr. Adenauer's Germany and distrust of involvement in Europe. Lord Beaverbrook and Mr. A. J. P. Taylor are all too evidently at one in their preference for a splendid isolation contradicted only by circumstance, and the hidden common factor, as in many such strange alliances, is chauvinism—the result of an uneasy failure to appreciate the consequences of diminished influence.

It is among the extreme factions of our two major political parties that this failure to come to terms with reality has been most marked—a fact which is hardly surprising, since a militant devotion to party dogma necessarily decreases contact with the surrounding world. The politicians

¹ It is a mark of the British government's rather legendary approach to Middle Eastern problems that the Suez crisis should have been produced by the nationalization of the Canal Company. In reality, as Mr. Marlowe points out in his book *Arab Nationalism and British Imperialism* (Cresset Press, 1961), the ownership of the company made not a scrap of difference to British communications with the Persian Gulf. The difference, if difference there was, occurred at the time of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1954 in which agreement was reached on the withdrawal of British troops from the Canal Zone base.

of the centre—those who form governments and head ministries—have had to do better and, by and large, have not done too badly. The acceptance by the Conservative Party both of the Welfare State and of the liquidation of Britain's colonial empire does great credit to their realism, as both these developments ran counter to their dearest prejudices.¹ And, similarly, the Labour willingness to join the U.S.A. in a mutual security pact directed against the U.S.S.R. shows a commendable freedom from the mythology in respect to Communism which befuddled all too many left-wing brains. Politically and economically, Britain has adapted itself to a new situation in a way which compares very favourably with the record of the only other country in a similar position—France.² In an empirical way, fortified by day-to-day expedients, the politicians managed to keep their heads above water and even to achieve some measure of adaptation. That the rate of change may still not be fast enough is due more to the extent of the transformation than to any political bankruptcy. Despite mistakes, the British system of government has stood an enormous strain astonishingly well.

The mistakes that were made were naturally determined by the prejudices of those making them. In questions concerning the empire the Conservatives would be likely to make (and in such cases as Cyprus and Suez have made) costly blunders. On the Labour side statesmen are more prone to err in the direction of a failure to appreciate the narrowness of an economic margin which limited plans for the expansion of the social services, or to understand that idealistic projects for international understanding impress the world a good deal less when they come from a country whose power to back them has notably lessened. Yet even at these sensitive spots problems have solved themselves. What was surprising was not that a Conservative Government should have got itself into a *cul-de-sac* in Cyprus or that a Labour Government should have overspent on the Health Service, but that the same Conservative Government should have reached agreement with the Cypriot ethnarchy and that the same Labour Government should have brought itself to impose a

¹ The idea of the Welfare State should not have offended traditional Toryism with its paternalist social conscience, but it was certainly accepted with reluctance by the believers in *laissez faire* whom the Conservative Party inherited from the Liberals.

² The Netherlands suffered too brutal and too swift an amputation of their colonial empire for the resulting crisis not to be brought home to them. Moreover, Holland had not the great power responsibilities of Britain.

charge on medical prescriptions and dental treatment.¹ One may agree or disagree with the policies of post-war British governments, but, taken as a whole, they represent an impressive record of effective empiricism in their approach to individual problems. Moreover, in the three most important aspects of British policy—the American alliance, the introduction of the Welfare State and the transformation of a colonial empire into a number of independent nations—the policies of our two main political parties have been so alike as to be practically indistinguishable. Abroad it has generally been assumed that a change of government in Britain made little or no difference, and even viewed from inside it can hardly be sustained that an electoral swing brings about any very earth-shaking consequences.²

This similarity is due to the homogeneity and sense of responsibility which preside over British political life, but it has been increased by loss of power. No doubt a doctrinaire Conservative would like to arrest the break-up of the British Empire by some striking action. No doubt a doctrinaire Socialist would like to push nationalization far beyond its present point. But the facts of life and power are against them. To have maintained the British raj in India, to assert it more recently in Africa, would have taken a military effort far beyond what either public opinion or the economic state of the country would permit (one reason why France was able to carry on the Algerian war for so long is that it is a very rich country going through a phase of economic expansion—whether this is altogether a good thing is another matter). In the same way a country which depends on its trading position in a highly competitive world cannot risk experiments with export industries whose complication makes them exceptionally difficult for the state to administer directly. There can be no question here of a Socialist economy or a capitalist economy. What has been important to Britain since 1945, and what it has not always succeeded in getting, is an efficient economy. And since a competent observer of post-war British politics can write: 'It is true that

¹ These two instances are not intended to suggest any moral judgement. No doubt it is better to overspend on the Health Service than to stir up a hornets' nest in Cyprus. But the latter activity can be carried on with as strong a conviction of acting for the country's good as the former. It is simply less attractive to those who disapprove of power politics; that is, of politics.

² The position would be different were the unilateralists to win control of the Labour Party. But at the moment it looks as if they have been decisively repulsed, and, in any case, their victory would probably have meant the perpetuation of the Conservatives in power.

Britain is peculiarly vulnerable to outside influences in its trade, its colonial relations, and its foreign and defence policies. Yet in the past decade, this vulnerability has not wrecked a government,¹ we must conclude that the policy of restraint which the parties have imposed on themselves has paid off in that they have thereby avoided sudden storms, though not always creeping paralysis. For, highly creditable to English common sense though this empiricism of the centre has been, its successes have consisted of the resolution of short-term problems rather than of any attempt to construct a new framework for national policy. The past has been liquidated but the future has not begun to be built. For that something more would be required than an instinctive response to the dictates of necessity.

POWER AND PARLIAMENT

A greater degree of restriction on political action and the dominance since the war of the single viable policy could bring with it a lessening of the esteem in which such action is held. The decline of public respect for Parliament, which has been noted by a number of observers recently, may be due partly to an outmoded method of conducting business as well as to the juvenile high jinks with which members so frequently see fit to diversify it—to a general impression, in fact, that what goes on in the House of Commons is mere shadow-boxing.² But it also has something to do with Parliament no longer being as powerful as it once was. A question in the House can no longer deter Indian rajahs from using their subjects for tiger-bait or send gunboats scurrying to the rescue of some new Don Pacifico. It can only with difficulty change the decision of a regional hospital board. As Britain has got weaker, the bureaucracies of state and party have got stronger, and both these developments bear heavily on the House of Commons and its influence. It might be able to cope with the bureaucracy if it developed a method of work providing for a real examination of the country's administration, but the decreased power of the state of which it is the embodiment can hardly be remedied.

A seat in the House of Commons will always be as attractive as the prospects of a political career in Britain, and this no longer holds

¹ Richard Rose, *Must Labour Lose?* (Penguin, 1960), p. 97.

² I take it that the exaggerated use of parliamentary privilege is probably the most important single factor to diminish Parliament in the eyes of the public.

out the opportunities which it once did. Pleasant though the idea may be of frequenting what has been profanely described as 'the best pub in Europe', this in itself is not sufficient to recruit men of outstanding ability into politics. The rewards of power, which once made the game worth the candle for the ambitious, and the standards of public service which impelled the conscientious, are both no longer what they were, though the diminution is hardly visible as yet in terms of a lessening in quality of parliamentary personnel. It is more apparent in a certain decline in the dynamism of political life and in the relative national importance of those conducting it. Who cares who governs Denmark? The idea that Britain should be allowed to become another Scandinavian Welfare State is not a possible one, given our geographical situation, lack of natural resources and world commitments, but it is a good deal less of a nightmare to the ordinary man than it is to the politicians. He does not mind living in a Denmark. They certainly would. Alas, poor parliamentary Yorick!

Loss of British power in the world—a process speeded by that rise of the continental states of Russia and America which had been foreseen by such varied prophets as Alexis de Tocqueville, Alexander Herzen and Kaiser Wilhelm II—has brought about a lessening of freedom of action for the government of this country and, therefore, some lessening of interest in politics and political parties. In fact, the very success with which Britain's rulers have adapted themselves to the post-war world has increased political indifference. If something had gone seriously wrong (like the Algerian war in France), then politics would have taken on a renewed importance. The evident fascination exerted over as intelligent a politician as R. H. S. Crossman by the idea of some notable national catastrophe requiring the intervention of a parliamentary *deus ex machina* seems to be due to a realization of this fact (of course, he imagines that the machine would appear from his side of the stage, but this is by no means proven).¹

In proportion to the diminution of its responsibilities one can imagine Parliament becoming one of those institutions which everyone approves

¹ 'I believe that the choice with which the nations will soon be confronted will be between a purely authoritarian regime . . . and a Labour Government which undertakes a radical Socialist reconstruction, while preserving civil liberties and reviving Parliamentary democracy.' R. H. S. Crossman, *Labour in the Affluent Society* (Fabian Tract 325, London, 1960), p. 24. If this is the case, then the outlook is a black one, for it cannot have escaped Mr. Crossman's attention that countries when faced with the choice he describes have almost invariably opted for the authoritarian regime.

of in a modest way but to which nobody any longer pays very much attention—like the Kent County Council or the Metropolitan Water Board. Nor would this necessarily be as unfortunate as is sometimes suggested. When I hear political commentators regretting the fierce clashes of past days I can quite understand why they should do so: those epic jousts must have been far more interesting to watch and to describe than much of what goes on today. But I also remember Matthew Arnold's story of the dissenting manufacturer who founded a chapel in his native town and gloried in the enmities thereby awakened. Political activity or inactivity are not good or bad in themselves, and the country without politics of a spectacular kind may well be the happiest. What is clearly undesirable is fabricated political activity, fierce clashes about nothing, or, alternatively, political sluggishness, an unwillingness to take action when action is needed. Recently we have seen important issues of the day (entry into the European Economic Community and, for better or for worse, nuclear disarmament) more adequately discussed outside Parliament, while what went on in the House of Commons often appeared as a frenzied effort to persuade the public that the two main parties were different after all. And the so-called 'Liberal revival' of 1962 is rather the apotheosis of the anti-political than a quickening of life within the party system. Voters who have ceased to take politics seriously have returned Liberal candidates in a blind gesture of protest, quite regardless of whether they themselves were in agreement with the Liberal programme or whether the diverse utterances of the Liberal leadership reflected their own aspirations. This failure on the part of the electorate to care what they are voting for as long as they are voting against the established parties is a familiar and uncomfortable symptom of a decay in the esteem in which democratic political processes are held. Countries, as they have passed through a pre-political stage, may also reach a post-political one (i.e. one where party politics play a considerably reduced role in national life), and that stage is not necessarily the worst, but on the way it seems that they must traverse a dangerous area of irrationality and irresponsibility. A quieting of party strife might be no bad thing, but political hysterics has nothing to be said for it, and an anti-political stance is open to both possibilities.

Of course, the picture I have painted here is both paradoxical and exaggerated. Parliament is always likely to be of great importance to us, since it is the body which makes the laws that affect our everyday

lives, nor is politics likely to die away even in the most beneficent of welfare states. There will always be issues for citizens to differ over and individuals to become, first, heads of parties, and then statesmen. The point I wish to make here is that the decline of Britain's world power will very probably bring with it (after the Common Market struggle is over) a diminution in the tempo of political life at home. This would not necessarily be a sinister development, and might even be the result of wisdom: the utilization in straitened circumstances of the traditional moderation and common sense which have been the most valuable features of English political life. But this quieting process may also be accompanied by a demand for something 'new', some more exciting specific than that doled out by the old familiar parties, and it is at this point that unless the demand is resisted boredom with politics will become a desire to grasp at any political will-o'-the-wisp provided that it is fashionably alluring. It is the fate of those who let their political choice be determined by their appetite for amusement to end in the grip of a political automaton of their own creation. They reach their *ignis fatuus* and find that it burns them.

FRUSTRATION OF THE INTELLECTUALS

However desirable or undesirable the immediate political consequences of a lessening of British power in the world may be, there can be no doubt but that it has produced a series of not always conscious frustrations in the minds of English intellectuals. The reaction is, indeed, fairly simple when it comes from those few intellectuals whose opinions place them on the right-wing of politics and whose interest in political matters distinguishes them from that mass of conservative-minded intellectuals who signify by abstention their disbelief in this kind of solution. Their dislike of the new turn of events has been openly expressed both in the form of nostalgia for what once had been and also of constant, often carping, criticism of those countries—new states or continental powers—which have occupied the places that used to be marked in red on the map. Here the spate of novels about the last sad empire-builders no longer believing in their work, puzzled and hurt by the new democratic notions to which they are expected to conform, is at one with the *Daily Telegraph's* satirist Peter Simple and his Dr. Castrumba, the portable, all-purpose anti-colonialist. These are, of course, natural emotions. The British

record of overseas rule is not a disgraceful one. Most frequently our government of colonial territories was inspired by a genuine desire to improve the lot of the peoples concerned, entailing the sacrifice of health and energy by a series of devoted officials. From the utilitarians, with their plans for India, to the Kenya White Paper of 1923, where the principle of trusteeship in British colonies was first enunciated, a thread of idealism runs through the history of the British Empire, ennobling it and justifying it. For any Englishman it is irritating and also unjust to be constantly required to apologize for his national past, added to which the anti-colonial orthodoxy is rapidly becoming a tiresome form of cant.¹

Such feelings, however, are also dangerous, especially when they degenerate into bitterness. Significantly enough, the fall of the Hapsburg Empire often figures as comparison and admonition in Peter Simple's column, but the real lesson which the fate of Austria has to teach is that nostalgia for the past sterilizes the present in the domain both of politics and culture. It was entirely to be expected that a few eyes should water on seeing the flag hauled down at sunset for the last time, but constant lachrymosity is both disagreeable and takes up energies which could be more usefully employed elsewhere. Moreover, to jeer at the contrast between pretension and reality in the new African and Asian states is both ungenerous and unwise. We have to live with them, and it was, after all, we who, by breaking up their traditional societies, imposed on them the problem of realizing a synthesis between Western ideas and their own.

There was also a moment when bitterness on the right led those who felt in this way to advocate toughness, and to demand an assertion of Britain's place in the world, a refusal to truckle to lesser breeds. Thus *Punch*, under the able editorship of Malcolm Muggeridge, supported a strong line towards President Nasser right up to the moment of Suez. Then a latent schizophrenia caused by the spectacle of a statesman whom

¹ 'In the administration of Kenya His Majesty's Government regard themselves as exercising a trust on behalf of the African population, and they are unable to delegate or share this trust, the object of which may be defined as the protection and advancement of the native races.' Extract from Kenya White Paper, 1923, quoted in Sir Alfred Zimmern's *The Third British Empire*, 3rd ed. (Oxford University Press, 1934). It is significant that one feature of the British share in the grab for Africa was constant pressure by humanitarians on reluctant politicians for the direct administration of territories on the grounds that this would lead to better treatment of Africans than leaving them to the mercies of their own chiefs, Arab slavers and white traders.

it disliked pursuing a policy of which it approved became manifest, and in a cartoon of a pouncing sheep in wolf's clothing *Punch* came to the entirely justifiable conclusion that Sir Anthony Eden was doing things the wrong way. Indeed, this campaign for 'strong' action on the part of the government could hardly have survived Suez. For Suez was the moment when to the majority of Englishmen, on the right as on the left, the facts of Britain's diminished position in the world first became clear. Henceforward chauvinism—and there is much more to say about it in this connection—would take other forms than the dispatch of paratroops and cruisers to the shores of an underdeveloped country.

For if right-wing advocacy of 'strong' measures was dictated by a feeling that a halt must be called to Britain's decline in power, I suspect that it is also impossible to understand the almost hysterical rage with which English left-wing and liberal intellectuals attacked the Suez expedition without analysing their attitude towards that decline, and laying bare the conflict it produced within them. Their state of mind was a complex one. They were traditionally in sympathy with the aspirations to independence of colonial territories, and their attitude towards power as manifested in the play of international politics had always been that it was something immoral, at worst to be condemned, at best to be ignored by men of goodwill. Nevertheless, the dissolution of the empire and the dwindling of Britain's world power aroused in them not altogether surprising regrets and misgivings. Their post-1945 reconciliation with their country's government made the change still more of a shock. For it seemed that at the very moment when a British Labour Government was bursting with good intentions, at the very period of its history when Britain appeared best suited to exercise its influence for the good, that influence was to be taken from it. The more loyal the devotee of English social democracy, the more poignant the regrets. What a pity that Britain's wise policy of concessions towards Indian nationalists had not been imitated by the U.S.A. in its approach to Communist China. What a pity Britain had not been able to take the lead in a Europe linked in one fraternal chain of social-democratic governments. What a pity . . . But these regrets were as unavailing as they were unending. No amount of conviction of our own wisdom and dedication to the cause of social justice could prevent America exercising its leadership of the Western world in its own blundering way or make the tried remedies of the British Labour Party relevant to conditions in other countries. Behind

individual complaints lay a general nostalgia for a wider field of action for intentions which liberal intellectuals were quite sure were good ones.¹

These mixed feelings had a historical basis. Beatrice Webb once described imperialism as 'an impossible combination in British policy of Gladstonian sentimental Christianity with the blackguardism of Rhodes and Jameson',² but it was just 'Gladstonian sentimental Christianity' which, despite the Fabians, formed the major part of the ethos of the British Labour Party. The evangelical strain which was so strong in its members meant that they could not be entirely without sympathy for a Wilberforce's ideal of the improvement of native populations, though they might not view it quite as he did, as a Christian effort to raise the benighted heathen to one's own level.³ Still, the Labour Party was the heir to a confident benevolence which partook of the traditions of both practical Christianity and the enlightenment. The Fabians themselves inherited all of their methods and most of their intentions from the Utilitarians, who had expended a great deal of effort in trying to devise methods for the just, but authoritarian, government of India.⁴ The blithe confidence of nineteenth-century believers in progress that what was good for England was good for India and Africa was already being sapped as the century came to an end, but even Shaw was prepared to sustain (in *Fabianism and the Empire*, 1900) that if the Chinese could not run their own country decently then the great powers should take it over and do it for

¹ Matters were made worse from the point of view of those most devoted to an abstract Socialism by the cold war and the emergence of N.A.T.O. A lingering feeling that the U.S.S.R. is in some sense 'socialist', whereas America is 'capitalist', and that the Atlantic Alliance is 'reactionary' pervades the collection of New Left essays *Out of Apathy* (Stevens, 1960), providing a highly convenient alibi to explain the dissolution of the English left since the war.

² In *Our Partnership*, quoted by A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies* (Macmillan, 1959), p. 75. What 'Gladstonian sentimental Christianity' could mean in this context may be illustrated by his description of the British occupation of Egypt as a task 'which we are executing not alone, on our own behalf, but on behalf, I may say, of civilized mankind'. Magnus, op. cit., p. 294.

³ 'Are we so little aware of the vast superiority even of European laws and institutions, and far more of British institutions, over those of Asia, as not to be prepared to predict with confidence that the Indian community, which should have exchanged its dark and bloody superstitions for the genial influence of Christian light and truth, would have experienced such an increase of civil order and security, of social pleasures and domestic comforts, as to be desirous of preserving the blessings it had acquired . . . ?' Extract from a speech by William Wilberforce made in 1813 and quoted in *The English Utilitarians and India*, by Eric Stokes (Oxford University Press, 1959).

⁴ See Stokes, op. cit., passim.

them. And in this he was in a direct line of descent from a James Mill refusing to hear of a wider employment of Indians in official positions, or a Macaulay doubting 'whether the Sanscrit literature be as valuable as that of our Saxon and Norman progenitors'. The self-confident idealism which formed so large a part of imperialism in its late-Victorian form was rooted in liberal and radical minds as well as in Conservative ones. The career of Joseph Chamberlain speaks for itself.

During the twentieth century an increasing scepticism about the wisdom or morality of bringing a specifically English enlightenment to bear on Asians and Africans undermined older attitudes. The years between Kipling's *Kim* and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* mark a crucial growth in respect for other people's values, and the rise of the theory of 'indirect' rule represents a lessening of Victorian self-confidence as well as a determination to make the best of the administrative resources available.¹ But a great deal of the old aspirations remained in other forms. After 1945 the white man's burden was represented ideally by a U.N. official instead of a district commissioner, but, as between two men in bush-shirt and khaki shorts, toiling devotedly over roads, hygiene, education and the encouragement of agriculture, there seems little to choose. The very idea of a white man's burden is, of course, archaic, and it seems probable that Africa, for instance, will go its own anarchic way without too much regard for neat foreign solutions, whether they are called direct rule or technical assistance. Yet for English liberal intellectuals there was, honourably enough, something to regret in a state of affairs which permitted the widest possible diffusion of their beneficent intentions. That that state of affairs had something to do with power did not strike them so forcibly until it began to be dissolved through weakness.

However, since their deepest convictions were opposed to the very idea of forceful power, to the very concept of empire, liberal intellectuals could hardly admit even to themselves that they regretted the past. Outwardly they were full of self-congratulation that a British government was acting morally and magnanimously towards its ex-colonies, even if the process did symbolize a decline in that government's world authority (and hence, indirectly, in their own influence on events). Inwardly, regrets seem to have lingered, assuaged perhaps by a conscious

¹ Not that Kipling was lacking in respect for Indian values, but that he subordinated these to the law-givers and the bridge-builders of the raj.

moral superiority or by the polite fiction of the Commonwealth ('Britain, a leader of free nations', as the cant phrase has it), but reappearing unmistakably in schemes which displayed a hidden desire to make that leadership more effective—for the good of all concerned, naturally. Thus the popularity of such catch-phrases as 'aid to underdeveloped countries', 'point four', 'technical assistance', showed that if liberal Englishmen fled with horror from the idea of being colonialists they had not altogether abandoned the ambition to act as schoolmasters. The one is certainly a nobler aim than the other, but it is not necessarily less authoritarian or less irritating. Moreover, it probably implies the same mistake about Britain's actual resources after 1945. The idea, however, remains highly attractive to liberal and left-wing intellectuals. The interest now taken in African problems by educated altruists is one instance of the continuance of a spirit of service which led liberals like Cromer to their enlightened imperialism, conceived of as carried on in the interests of the populations concerned, but rarely, if ever, executed in terms of what those populations themselves either desired or could comprehend. It is, of course, far easier to satisfy a spirit of service by working for the well-being of people whose problems are not one's own. In his own class, country or milieu the reformer is handicapped by the difficulty of diagnosing ills which may be seen quite clearly from outside. It was probably no accident that the Utilitarians found a more fertile field for their ideas in India than in England. It is, no doubt, still far easier to play the benevolent despot in the Punjab than in Pudsey.

The desire to help those less fortunate than oneself is one of the noblest legacies of the English liberal tradition. But it was one which was bound to lead to frustration in the post-war world. A series of economic crises limited what could be done in the way of financial aid, while the granting of independence to a series of former colonial territories, positive gesture though it was politically, necessarily entailed a narrowing of opportunity for English good intentions. Even the political results of that liberally granted independence were often disappointing, since the new states thus created did not always display the gratitude every ageing Lear believes he has a right to expect from his daughters. Moreover, in a cold-war situation, the lead in philanthropy in Asia and Africa was taken by America, whose methods failed to satisfy the lofty standards of idealism set by English liberal intellectuals. For them there remained the ground-nuts scheme, the consolations of the Commonwealth, the

assurance of their own rectitude and frustration. But mostly frustration—a frustration which could scarcely be analysed, since it was caused by developments to which they felt themselves bound to give moral approval. The psychological frustration of the liberal intellectual goes a long way to explain the sense of traumatic shock which he experienced on learning of the Suez operation. The attack on Egypt swept aside the various veils with which he had sought to cover Britain's decline in power, and the real position was revealed in a nakedness all the more disagreeable for being exposed to a particularly frosty international climate. Where was our 'moral leadership' now? Where was a Commonwealth designed to serve as a bridge between the West and the new states of Asia and Africa? With world opinion condemning British and French aggression in a fury of moral indignation, in the course of which the Soviet repression of the Hungarian rising was largely neglected, with Canada, India and Pakistan taking a leading part in that condemnation, with America cutting off economic aid and attacking a European display of 'brinkmanship', the precariousness of Great Britain's position in the world was revealed in a way that was bound to be displeasing to any Englishman. This was the moment at which it was demonstrated that Britain could not 'go it alone' (the term has come to have something of the same scornful implications as '*L'Italia farà da sé*'), and, paradoxically enough, the Suez failure, by showing the difficulty of pursuing a policy to which America was sharply opposed, provided an unwelcome lesson for those who were most hostile to the whole business: the left wing of the Labour Party and especially its left-wing intellectuals.¹

The Suez affair was by no means the greatest example of international immorality in a decade which provided some hot competition. It was a piece of suicidal idiocy, whose half-hearted incompetence robbed it of much of its wickedness, and the fact that it was committed by a Conservative Government allowed liberal intellectuals to attack it without any of the inner conflict which had kept them from a similar explosion

¹ The nearest historical parallel to the Suez expedition seems to be the Jameson raid, which also displayed a total lack of political common sense together with a bungling and half-hearted attempt at cunning. The difference between 1895 and 1956 is well illustrated by the contrast between the placidity displayed by an earlier British government in face of general international hostility and the impossible situation in which its successor sixty-one years later was to find itself. Salisbury and Chamberlain had not to cope with Russian rockets, a run on the pound and a shortage of petrol.

about, let us say, Ernest Bevin's Palestine policy.¹ They were angry about it—angry about the attack and also angry about its failure—and their inner humiliation gave a special quality to their wrath, a sort of hectic vindictiveness into which they poured the frustration of the post-war years. This did not occur without a certain sense of relief (to this day there are a number of publicists whom the mention of Suez affects like the smell of powder a war-horse; at last they were influencing something; it was their finest hour), but the catharsis was not lasting. The shouting died away, pro- and anti-Suez men spoke to one another again, and English intellectuals were left once more with a Britain whose lessened power was now strikingly apparent and whose assets of self-respect and conscious international virtue were considerably wasted.

NARROWING HORIZONS

Suez, then, was an acute spiritual crisis in English life, and it is no accident that the years which followed 1956 should have produced so much reflection on, and criticism of, our society. The comforting image of a Britain doing the right thing, and revered by all for its spirit of equity and progress, had disappeared, while the frustrations it concealed were reinforced. In fact, it is a little surprising that Suez does not seem to have produced any very discernible political effects inside this country. Of course, it is probable that the mass of the people were not as opposed to the Egyptian expedition as the intellectuals.² The innate nationalism of the English working class was reflected by talk in the pubs, and came as something of a shock to enthusiasts of the left (the organizers of the anti-nuclear campaign seem to have had the same experience, though their appeal to anti-Americanism was calculated to flatter insular prejudices). But the appallingly stodgy nature of contemporary English political life also had its discouraging effect on those intellectuals whose moral sense (and common sense) had been outraged by Suez. Mr. Amis has

¹ 'All in all, the [Suez] expedition was about as successful as the classic Walcheren expedition of 1806 which is commonly cited as the supreme example of a government's lack of determination, foresight, and competence.' Guy Wint and Peter Calvocoressi, *Middle East Crisis* (Penguin Books, 1957), p. 100.

² 'Nasser was very generally disliked and throughout the crisis no small part was played by the ordinary Englishman's contempt for Egyptians. When later Britain actually went to war, Eden's popularity rose because many people approved of having a bash at a man (not a white man) who had thumbed his nose at Britain.' Wint and Calvocoressi, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

written an account of his own disillusionment which is searing and probably quite typical:

'And while we are on boring meetings, let me complain as savagely as possible about the local Labour Party meeting on Suez which, breaking a habit of nearly fifteen years' standing, I went so far as to attend, vowing to join the party immediately afterwards. Within a quarter of an hour I had silently released myself from my vow. I had forgotten what political meetings were like. Out they poured from speaker after speaker, all the vile old sick-and-tired thought-savers: "I am sure that I speak for all of us here when I say that we deeply deplore . . . act of wanton aggression . . . policy based on international justice . . . extend the hand of friendship . . . spirit in the country today . . . united as never before . . . go forward to victory." In my undisciplined way I could not, or anyhow did not, refrain from groaning slightly at some of this. Indignant glances were turned on me, as on a self-confessed Suez Grouper.'¹

British political parties during the fifties were too beset by the dully professional to provide a suitable channel for that diffusion of new ideas into the nation's life which intellectuals should provide. Also, since the power of the Parliament at Westminster is now less than it once was, there was less inducement for an intellectual to put himself in a position of political influence. In the thirties things were much simpler. A liberal intellectual who wished to change the state of affairs in, say, Spain, would set himself to change British policy towards Spain with some confidence that this would make a real difference to the situation. At the back of his mind was the idea that if only a majority could be found in the British Parliament for the course he proposed then everything would be all right. Even if he did not specifically believe in Parliament as an institution, his basic assumption was the same. If it wanted to, the British government could abandon the non-intervention policy, send arms to Spain, save the Spanish Republic. Then there was always a choice to be

¹ Amis, loc. cit., pp. 11-12. I can imagine the indignation of those speakers if they ever read Mr. Amis's pamphlet. 'I've been in the movement thirty years . . .' Alas, they have been so long in the movement that it is no longer a movement but a stasis. It is superfluous to add that a Labour Party which cannot attract Mr. Amis at the height of his indignation over Suez is unlikely to attract sufficient 'floating' voters to bring itself back to power.

made, a good or bad decision to be taken. If you took the good decision you were progressive. If the bad you were reactionary. At the time of the Spanish Civil War intellectuals did not have to cope with the dismaying possibility that Britain might not be able to affect the issue one way or the other. Nowadays anyone with left-wing sympathies may dislike General Franco every bit as much as he was disliked in the thirties, but it is all too evident that there is precious little any British government can do except to make the best of him. Similarly, though Dr. Verwoerd's South Africa has quite rightly been compelled to leave the Commonwealth, the effect of this so far has been to extricate British statesmen from a dilemma rather than inflict damage on the South African Nationalists.¹

A protest against the Suez operation might mitigate but could hardly resolve the main problem of the English intellectual: how to give his own position its necessary universality from within a society which was no longer the centre of the world picture, how to move the earth without a fixed point on which to support himself. The final consequence of a loss of world power was that an English thinker was likely to find his ideas, cultivated within a society which had suddenly become marginal, irrelevant as far as other societies were concerned. And this in turn reflected on the quality of the ideas themselves. No doubt genius will always make its way, but the kind of immediacy which is provided by being close to the centre of European or world preoccupations is a great encouragement. As it is, the rather eccentric character of English society, together with the loss of confidence produced by loss of power, create a considerable danger of the development of a provincialism which has little to teach the rest of the world and is inclined to complacency. The present Byzantine state of English philosophy is one symptom of this withdrawal into ourselves. Things are, of course, made somewhat (but not a great deal) easier by the fact that English is the language spoken by one of the major world powers, and that, therefore, the danger of cultural isolation is less for an English intellectual than it would be for his Dutch opposite number. But the problem remains: it is not an easy one to solve, and it has not in fact been solved. For in this connection all talk of 'moral

¹ South Africa is certainly a case in which it is essential and possibly even of practical use for Britain to express moral disapproval. The point I wish to make here is that this disapproval is far from being as efficacious as it might have been in similar circumstances thirty years ago. South Africa's departure from the Commonwealth brings an end to our embarrassment rather than to the plight of the coloured population of the Union.

leadership' and the Commonwealth appears as a not altogether harmless form of whistling in the dark.

Naturally, one method of dealing with the situation has been to welcome it—much as a warrior whose horse had been shot under him might assert the merits of going on foot. A certain section of intellectuals were ready to boast of their withdrawal into England, rather than to regret it. In this they were assisted both by *Scrutiny's* insistence on the cultural traditions of the English provinces and by a natural reaction against the fake cosmopolitanism which had the prefaces to novels dated from Berlin, Mykonos and Santa Margherita. Moreover, if European ideas have been unfashionable, American ones were not.¹ In the numerous writings on English society which have appeared recently transatlantic sociology has been freely used, and countless intellectuals have strained their eyesight trying to detect the arrival of 'the other-directed man', 'the affluent society' and 'the consumer society', whether to welcome them or to compare them unfavourably with the rosy picture of things as they once were. However, the emphasis has been on England in these writings, none of which make any real attempt to consider the nature of the American society that threw up these concepts. And the specifically English themes adopted by many contemporary novelists also seem to represent an unconscious determination to make the best of the material to hand. It is certainly no accident that the post-war years have seen a return to the forms of comedy, even of caricature, which are traditional to the English novel, and the abandonment of past attempts to write French novels in English. Significantly enough, most English novelists still make a fuss about sex, taking it, as they always have, either far too seriously or not seriously enough. As for foreign places, what contemporary writer can get the feel of one as Kipling was able to get the feel of India? No doubt after 1945 Englishmen badly needed a respite to consider themselves and their country, but it would not be a good thing if they contented themselves for too long with isolation from the outside world and the fashions that prevail there.

At times this acceptance of a narrowing of national horizons has assumed the aspect of a rather unpleasant type of gloating. As in the thirties, *Schadenfreude* is a disease whose incidence is heaviest on the left,

¹ This may now be changing. Brecht and Sartre now bear witness to the advantages which a reading of French and German may procure for the intellectual who wishes his culture exclusive and up-to-the-minute.

and throughout the post-war period readers of the *New Statesman and Nation* have rarely been allowed to forget the existence of some exciting national catastrophe or other just round the corner. Whether this attitude is altogether wise politically is a difficult question. It allows the journalist who adopts it to appear to be always right (if there is disaster he has foretold it; if not, his prediction is soon forgotten, and, in any case, prophecies of doom produce a peculiarly comfortable feeling in a wealthy society), but there is also a point at which an audience tires of being lectured about its own guilt and impending punishment. There are signs that, as a generation of haunted liberals disappears from the scene, Lord Morrison of Lambeth is not far wrong when he points to the air of enjoyment with which Britain's difficulties are often greeted in the Labour Party as a major weakness which ought to be eliminated.¹ I sometimes feel that during the thirties left-wing editorialists acquired the habit of equating Britain's position in the world with that of the Tory Party at home and of indulging in covert rejoicing at a setback to the resulting Janus—a habit which the fifties would do little to break.² However this may be, it seems likely that Lord Morrison is right and that, in this present imperfect world, any politician or intellectual who appears to attach more importance to the lives of Egyptians or Greek Cypriots than to those of British soldiers is liable to find himself separated by a considerable emotional gulf from the majority of his fellow countrymen. Being a pro-Boer in 1962 is easier in some ways than it was in 1900, but it is no less likely to produce unpredictably chauvinistic reactions.

¹ 'Above all the Labour Party must be British both in Parliament and out of it. Somehow, as I have said, we have managed to give the impression that the party is anti-British, and pro- every foreign country, which is an unfair exaggeration. Sometimes the British are wrong, and it is necessary to say so with intelligent and constructive criticism expressed in sorrow, not with pleasure. During and after the Suez crisis there were excitement and even hysteria in the Labour ranks. It was doubtless regarded at the time as a highly successful political campaign, but one result was that Labour gave the impression of thinking more of Nasser's Egypt than of Britain. . . .' Morrison of Lambeth, *Herbert Morrison, An Autobiography* (Odhams, 1960), p. 328. Lord Morrison also believes that this defect was one of the causes of the loss of the 1959 election.

² However, on seeing that the *New Statesman* was advocating the reintroduction of conscription—partly for its character-building properties—I felt that something or other had come full circle. It would only have to come out in favour of the sending of British troops armed with conventional weapons against Russian tactical atomic artillery for us to be right back at Passchendaele, if not at Spion Kop.

CHAUVINISM

Extreme forms of nationalism are endemic in states who feel their power slipping from them, and it might have been expected that the reaction of Englishmen to the present situation of their country would have included this mutilated patriotism. Fortunately, nothing has yet occurred to match the *Baltikum* that beset the Weimar Republic or the Algerian *crise de conscience* that dissolved the authority of the French state. The force of tradition, the two-party system, the convenient Commonwealth technique for painlessly disposing of a colonial empire, the relative social homogeneity of England—all these factors have played their part in preventing the decline from being accompanied by convulsions of the body politic. There are, however, some symptoms which are disquieting, not so much as an immediate political threat but rather as signs of a hidden stock of disgruntlement and irritation which only awaits an occasion to appear in its true shape of vicious xenophobia. Since chauvinism in its more extreme and undisguised forms is not usually very attractive to intellectuals, their wounded nationalism has been muted compared with that expressed by politicians and industrial leaders, who cannot exactly be defined as being within their ranks but who also cannot be entirely excluded from them in this connection. It is to Frank Cousins talking of 'two mad groups in the world' or to any Suez grouper giving his opinion of President Nasser or of Arabs in general that we must go if we want the best examples. The distinction between right and left here is more one of target than anything else. Left-wing chauvinists direct their fire against Western Europe (more particularly against West Germany, whose principal crime seems to be its prosperity—for the wrong reasons), while Tories concentrate on the new states of Africa and Asia, deriving a strange satisfaction from demonstrating their administration to be inefficient and corrupt.¹ However, both left and right can combine in attacking America,

¹ A prominent Labour M.P. was heard to declare, when speaking of the Common Market, that we did not want to join up with 'those bloody Catholics'—a level of argument which speaks for itself. However, the *locus classicus* for attack on Europe is, of course, the Beaverbrook Press. The following great thought comes from the *Evening Standard* of November 9th, 1961: 'A pathetic scene, humbling for Britain's pride, is being played out in Brussels. Led by Germany's Professor Hallstein, the members of the European club are vetting this country's application to join. . . . So Britain, having defeated Germany at war, having expended her treasures defending civilization against the Nazis, finds herself dependent on the goodwill of the men

and anti-Americanism is one of the meaner and more sinister symptoms which have recurred in the psychological crisis of post-war England.

No doubt the basis of it is envy. It is never pleasant to find oneself supplanted in the world by an ally who is considerably more powerful and, at the same time, less experienced. Possibly the English now view the Americans much as the French viewed the English from 1905 to 1939 (if this is so, the Suez expedition was our march into the Ruhr), and certainly some of the voices now upraised to demand the rupture of the American alliance and the dissolution of N.A.T.O. in their mixture of cowardice, self-deception and unavowable motivations recall the high-sounding phrases about French independence with which men, who later collaborated with the Germans, sought to mask their anglophobia or their sympathy for dictators. Of course, some of the irritation is genuine enough. Americans are not always wise about the way in which they consider European feelings, and the ostentation of their national wealth did them no good immediately after the war (this is now less important in Europe; I suspect that in underdeveloped countries it still has immense significance). Conservatives find American anti-colonialism facile and hypocritical, thereby finding themselves in the company of Marxists denouncing the imperialism of the 'market' rather than of the 'flag'. Socialists dislike a prosperity achieved by all the wrong methods and a social development which upsets their most confident predictions.¹ More important, however, than all these motives for anti-Americanism is the recent failure of American foreign policy. During the Eisenhower era there were few attempts at a decisive lead from America, and the natural consequence of this was disappointment on the part of those who believe in the Atlantic Alliance and a search for other horses to back by *machtspolitik* men. And to the ineffectualness of U.S. foreign policy as conducted by John Foster Dulles was added a lack of understanding for, or consideration of, those whose view of the U.S.S.R. was neither

against whom she fought.' Mark the assumption that this country's application to enter the Common Market should not be examined at all. It is worth quoting this kind of stuff, because it is read by very many people, and it also speaks the pseudo-respectable language which we might hear from politicians and officials were a 'Britain First' government ever to come to power. We have been warned.

¹ In 1934 Jennie Lee was writing: 'From all the signs at present visible it is Fascism, not Socialism, which is most likely to overtake the American masses.' In this she was at one with Sir Stafford Cripps (cf. above, p. 39) and many others, and there was a great revival of the same theory during the McCarthy era. But McCarthy died, and America helped to defeat Fascism, not to make it. (Pelling, *op. cit.*, p. 142.)

so black nor so distant as that held in Washington. The Dulles policy, in fact, was a type of unimaginative stonewalling which failed to secure results but infuriated allies with frontiers rather nearer to Russia and neutrals whose appreciation of the international situation was totally different. It is not surprising that there was far less anti-Americanism in Britain when General Marshall reigned in the State Department and President Truman in the White House, and there are signs that the arrival of President Kennedy is already having its effect. He has, indeed, become something of a hero in this country.

The relationship of English intellectuals to this particular symptom of chauvinism has been ambiguous. In need of the compensation it provided, but deeply influenced by American thought and literature, and with a growing knowledge of a country where lecture tours guaranteed a profitable means of subsistence and there was no apparent language barrier, their feelings and behaviour were often contradictory. A common attitude—but not, fortunately, as common as in France—has been to enjoy America thoroughly, to accept its material advantages, but with a subtle nuance of superiority which let it be understood that one was dealing with a society without ‘roots’ and/or social democracy. This frame of mind has often been powerfully reinforced by a reading of contemporary American criticisms of their own society. Books such as *The Lonely Crowd* and *The Organization Man* have been perused and used as though they represented a scientific diagnosis rather than a polemical moralist’s view of the American condition. America has been condemned as a society where the survival of the individual is in serious danger on the evidence of works whose very existence should have demonstrated the falsity of the hypothesis. To criticize the use made of this type of analysis of American society is not to deny that a highly developed industrial society has certain new characteristics, not all of which are desirable. Since America is the most highly developed industrial society in the world today, it is convenient to use it as an awful warning, and this view of things amply atones for the depression a European intellectual might otherwise feel when contemplating its technical superiority. However, an advanced industrial society also has its points, and it is deceptive to take what are almost satirical descriptions of it as a basis for value judgements.¹

¹ When William H. Whyte, Jr., in the conclusion to his book, *The Organization Man* (Anchor Book ed.) writes: ‘My charge against the Social Ethic, then, is on precisely the grounds of contemporary usefulness it so venerates. It is not, I submit,

Intellectual attitudes towards America are also determined by the effect on English culture of American influences. And by this is meant the material conveyed by the mass-media of television, wireless, the Press and pocket-books rather than the impact of Mr. Tennessee Williams on our stage or of the *New Yorker* on our sense of humour. As between the two cultural levels, indeed, there are clearly opposed reactions. English intellectuals rather approve of the *New Yorker* and, oddly enough, do not disapprove of Mr. Williams as much as they should. It is unquestionable (and, as far as I know, unquestioned) that modern American literature has exercised by far the greatest influence on English contemporary writing of any outside source. The English novel, the English poem, the English short story have all been transformed by a reading of American writers, and we are even beginning to appreciate some of the problems that nineteenth-century American literature presents for Americans. As regards music, the immense impression made by jazz is a well-known phenomenon. Indeed, the one field where there seems to have been relatively less transatlantic communication is that of the visual arts, though it is probably only the peculiarly impervious nature of British architects taken in the mass which has prevented a long-lived genius like Frank Lloyd Wright from having some repercussions here. American academic life, too, is highly respected in England, and the feeling which is sometimes expressed that in certain universities standards have been sacrificed to numbers once again echoes American criticisms of themselves.

It is when magistrates and newspapers talk of horror comics, Hollywood and violence on television programmes that the adjective 'American' becomes a term of abuse. Indeed, the tendency for these imported features of contemporary English life to produce anti-American reactions in socially conscious persons is so marked that the reverse process is also to be seen: the campaign against horror comics appears to have been encouraged by interested parties with the object of producing suited to the needs of "modern man", but is instead reinforcing precisely that which least needs to be emphasized, and at the expense of that which does' (p. 439), he is doing the same thing as moralists have done through the ages, and the sociological evidence which precedes the final jeremiad is also a part of it. Mr. Whyte's book is not sociology, but a moralist's polemic using sociology—and much the more interesting for that. And just as Jeremiah in his fashion proved that the children of Israel were not entirely given over to idolatry, so Mr. Whyte, by so obviously being an un-Organization Man, shows that there is not much danger of his worst fears coming to pass.

anti-Americanism. Admittedly, the English teen-ager apeing what he takes to be American habits and manners is an unpleasing spectacle, admittedly Hollywood is frequently vulgar or mushily sentimental with a painful technical competence, but it is no more fair to blame this on the totality of American culture than it would be to blame this country for the snobbery with which Anglophilia (the cult of 'le gentleman') was pursued for many decades on the continent. Moreover, if we are to have mass entertainment it is better that it should be good mass entertainment. Much American 'popular culture' caters at a high level of adequacy for perfectly respectable needs.

The grain of substance behind the widely spread legend of the deleterious effect on English youth of American cultural exports seems to lie in the fact that, for historical reasons, U.S. society is a more violent society than ours, and that in England violence has become to the mid-twentieth century what sex was to the mid-nineteenth: something very shocking indeed. Many gangster or cowboy films are artistically valuable, and their holocausts rather less bloody than those of minor Elizabethan drama, but they touch an exposed nerve in liberal intellectuals. Sex has been 'progressive' for some time now, and the Puritanism which repressed it has been concentrated against violence. What Paris once was to the Puritans is now represented by New York and Chicago. Divorce is O.K.; boxing and wrestling are definitely not. One result of this shift of feeling has been a vague belief in American powers of corruption, which are, of course, unimpeded by any language barrier and conveyed by far more potent instruments of communication than were available to Paris at its sexiest. Of course, this is probably only a temporary situation. If we continue the parallel it may appear probable that, just as our century has found in sex a means of liberation after its repression by our grandfathers, so our grandchildren will react against our own repression of violence. This is not a particularly comforting thought, but it is arguable that it is the inevitable result of refusing to recognize one side of human nature in the name of an ethical system. Violence is the forbidden fruit of our time, and we all know what happens to forbidden fruit.

Something of the same moral feeling, but transported on to the political level, produces a rather more subtle motive for anti-Americanism among intellectuals. Just as liberals dislike violence, so they also have an ingrained suspicion of state power—especially when it is the power of a state with which they are in some way concerned. As the strongest

country in the Western alliance America provides a sitting target for that scrupulous distrust of the exercise of power by one's own side which is so typical of the English left-wing intellectual (a right-wing intellectual would also criticize American use of power, but as being unskilful—unskilful because American and not British). And this moralistic criticism of the use of power by a country which is not one's own, but which does head an alliance to which one's own belongs, has a double advantage for the liberal intellectual. It enables him to indulge his taste for a masochistic brand of self-criticism, while at the same time allowing a compensatory feeling of superiority over an ally who has superseded Britain in the guilty but fascinating exercise of power. A British Labour M.P. who attacks American policy in, say, South Korea can extract all the thrills inherent in an assault on imperialist orthodoxy, as well as a comfortable assurance of being better, if not stronger, than lesser breeds across the Atlantic. He can disperse his empire and have it—at any rate as an irritant, a kind of moral mustard plaster.

The processes of thought described above consist essentially in the transfer to America of many defects for which we used to blame ourselves, and in the addition of a new sense of bitterness stemming from the fact that we can now hardly expect our reproaches to be effective. The operation is one of 'projection', a term familiar to psychologists. It has frustration at its origin, and a necessary feature of it is the existence of an adequate scapegoat. At the time of Suez this felt want was (not without reason) provided by Sir Anthony Eden and the British government. More often a sense that power was now situated outside this country together with the chauvinism generated by it and the natural prejudices of the English intellectual made the U.S.A. an obvious substitute. And it is a curious indication of the attraction exercised by this alternative that indignation directed against West Germany (where anger over past aggression is nicely blended with irritation over present competition) is sometimes expressed in terms which associate America in the condemnation—often at the cost of being self-contradictory.¹

¹ Thus Germany is simultaneously attacked for sinister ambition and for too great a subservience to American policies, for militarism and materialism on the transatlantic model.

LOSS OF PURPOSE

Chauvinism arising out of frustration is, therefore, endemic among English intellectuals, whatever their political convictions may be. Paradoxically, it is even more far-reaching on the left, where it is based on an unreflecting consciousness of superior moral status, than on the right, where it is simply founded on an old-fashioned English nationalism. And the channelling of these resentments towards America has obvious connections with what Orwell called 'transferred nationalism',¹ the adoption by English intellectuals during the thirties of the U.S.S.R. as their country. Only in this instance it is their criticism of, rather than their affection for, their own country which is to be exported. Admiration stays at home in the form of a certain moral complacency.

This mechanism created by frustration arising from loss of power, which projects a dissatisfaction that cannot be openly analysed for what it is on to foreign countries, seems an almost inevitable part of the decline of empires. Where the right does not wish to admit to itself that such a decline is taking place, and the left refuses to recognize that disagreeable consequences are likely to follow from it, such a transfer is unavoidable. Chauvinism is one aspect of it. Another and still less creditable one is the use of national minorities—the Jews or Negroes—as scapegoats. Hitler's rise to power after Germany's defeat in 1918 illustrates the possibilities here. So far, however, in Britain the most general sign of such diffused frustration has been a tendency to grumble and, from time to time, to indulge in rather aimless outbursts of rage against comparatively minor irritations. And this is just the state of mind I find in writings like some of the essays in *Declaration*, which now appear in their context as a significant symptom of the narrowing and hardening of the arteries of English life, both on an intellectual and on a more everyday level.

For this lessening in scale of English life is not only a psychological affair, though I have been at some pains to demonstrate its psychological consequences. It also has practical results: fewer jobs for educated people (though this has hardly begun to be felt as yet), less opportunity for profitable adventure open to lovers of change and excitement, less occasion for residence abroad, practically none for pro-consular administration,

¹ In his 'Notes on Nationalism', *England, Your England* (Secker and Warburg, 1953), pp. 41-67.

and, above all, the fearful economic strain implied by a lingering desire to keep up with the Joneses across the Elbe or the Atlantic. As has already been pointed out, one of the most depressing features of post-war English society has been the way in which perfectly good plans for the improvement of life in this island have time and again been maimed, slowed down or stopped altogether by a creeping economic crisis expressing itself in lack of money for what are called 'marginal' activities. And for reasons which will be analysed later the 'marginal' activities were always cultural activities—just those things by which intellectuals set so much store. In its effect on the individual this atmosphere of retrenchment had nothing of the happy-go-lucky quality to be found in some poor households, but rather that of shabby gentility on a national scale trying hard to hide frayed shirt cuffs and shiny trousers. There will be more to say about this in the course of a discussion of some of the tensions underlying our Welfare State society. Here I should simply like to note that the prevalence of this atmosphere throughout the entire period of the post-war Labour Government was a disaster from which the Labour Party has yet to recover. The greyness of austerity made the ideals behind it look grey as well.

Loss of power is also loss of purpose. If a country lives on so narrow a margin that it has a struggle to maintain the gains achieved by past idealism, then the impulse to plan future reform will slump. In this connection loss of momentum means regression. Among intellectuals and particularly among the young ones there will be a fund of frustrated idealism on the look-out for any cause that comes along, a pent-up desire all the stronger for not easily being recognizable by those experiencing it. Such a longing is essentially unorientated, and the satisfactions that it may seek will not necessarily be those that anyone concerned with liberal improvement would recommend. Anyone desiring passionately to throw himself into the service of some as yet unidentified cause is a gift to the demagogue and perhaps to the criminal.

Jimmy Porter, the hero of John Osborne's play *Look back in Anger*, provides a good example of the disadvantages and dangers of this attitude. From the very first scene it is made quite clear what he is looking for ('Oh, brother, it is such a long time since I was with anyone who got enthusiastic about anything'),¹ and, as the play continues, it becomes equally clear that we are intended to take the 'anything' literally. The only

¹ John Osborne, *Look back in Anger* (Faber, 1960), p. 15.

political activity mentioned is the breaking up of someone else's meetings, but Jimmy is bitter about Spain and envies the single-mindedness of homosexuals.¹ It is not surprising when some time later on he comes to the conclusion that 'there aren't any good, brave causes left',² and one might feel a little sorry for him if his romantic bitterness against 'them' were not invariably accompanied by an equally sentimental self-pity. His is the pathetic craving for a clear moral issue in a world which has become ruthlessly complex, and his failure to find one takes the form of a passionate need to be angry about something or, if all else fails, to be angry about having nothing to be angry about.

All this is not unfamiliar, but accompanying it are other characteristics which are equally recognizable and which make the future of Jimmy Porter a disquieting subject. Essentially undifferentiated and undirected as his thirst for a cause is, his romanticism, his lack of self-discipline, his taste for violence and egotistical bitterness might send him in any direction. He is more likely to end up as a totalitarian than as a democrat, and Fascism is as probable a choice for him as Communism. In fact, if we add his regressive attitude towards sex (the terrible and moving retreat into childishness and, significantly enough, into sterility as well with which the play ends) and his brutality towards women ('I've no public-school scruples about hitting girls'),³ Fascism seems the likelier alternative. I imagine that under the Weimar Republic the Nazi Party was full of Jimmy Porters (the same might be said of Archie Rice, the hero of Mr. Osborne's subsequent play *The Entertainer*, but this is a better-known phenomenon: the middle classes reacting to an economic pressure which they cannot control). Jimmy Porter, however, is a nihilist (a mild English version of the breed, to be sure),⁴ who would

¹ 'Sometimes I almost envy old Gide and the Greek Chorus boys. Oh, I'm not saying that it mustn't be hell for them a lot of the time. But, at least, they do seem to have a cause—not a particularly good one, it's true. But plenty of them do seem to have a revolutionary fire about them, which is more than you can say for the rest of us.' *Ibid.*, p. 35.

² *Ibid.*, p. 84.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 57. This is how Jimmy addresses a girl who has just lost his child: 'I don't exactly relish the idea of anyone being ill, or in pain. It was my child too, you know. But [*he shrugs*] it isn't my first loss.' (p. 92). And here he is meant to be showing his better self!

⁴ The mildness of English nihilism is indicated by Mr. Osborne's curious letter to 'my fellow countrymen' in *Tribune* (August 18th, 1961). Any self-respecting European anarchist of bygone days would not have contented himself with writing:

find in the fraternity of mass action an escape from his own lack of direction, and in this he resembles some of André Malraux's heroes or the young officers of the *Baltikum* depicted by Ernst von Salomon in *Die Geächteten*, who ended by assassinating Walther Rathenau and giving German democracy a kick downhill. The violent circumstances are not there for Jimmy Porter, but, if they were, I for one would not trust his generosity to get the better of his romanticism and his need to find oblivion in a 'movement'.

Fortunately, Jimmy Porter is not typical of actual British intellectuals, though his appearance on the stage in 1956 was not exactly a comforting symbol. Nihilism requires a certain self-destructive intensity, and most of us have not the temperament to support it. What *Look back in Anger* does illustrate conveniently is the ambivalent relationship between 'causes' and those who espouse them as well as the danger for intellectuals of losing themselves in a *credo ut intelligam* on any other than a religious level. Yet it is difficult not to be impressed by the number of intellectuals in England today who are willing to follow any banner, provided it is a banner, and that its colours are sufficiently fashionable. And since most measures for any considerable reform of English life demand too complicated a prior analysis to permit those striking contrasts of black and white in which cause-lovers revel, the banners adopted are mostly those of what might be called pseudo-causes—i.e. measures of reform which are either already inevitable or are of marginal significance or make few demands on those who support them or possess all three of these characteristics at the same time.

For instance, it is not very difficult or very bold for an English intellectual to take part in a campaign against South African *apartheid* at a time when it already appears to be totally condemned by history (to protest against it in South Africa itself would, of course, be quite another thing). No doubt, to jump on history's band-wagon is in the circumstances a worthy and reasonable choice, but there is something slightly artificial in an English intellectual's regarding it as a struggle into which

'There is murder in my brain, and I carry a knife in my heart for every one of you. Macmillan, and you, Gaitskell, you particularly.' He would have tried to do something about it. Still, we must be thankful for small mercies. I prefer 'knives in hearts' to knives in pockets and I am glad Mr. Osborne agrees with me. Incidentally, there is a strong resemblance between this kind of language and that of the French surrealists who thought that the most surrealist action was to fire a pistol at someone in the street. But it is not recorded that they killed anyone except themselves.

to throw oneself body and soul. And the concern displayed by intellectuals for the lot of the coloured population in South Africa, whom they can do little to help, is in sharp contrast to the very general indifference to the appalling conditions under which West Indian immigrants to this country often live—conditions which voluntary social work could do something to alleviate. Similarly, a campaign for the introduction of the amendments to the law on homosexuality recommended by the Wolfenden report would hardly require any of its supporters to go to the stake or even to the Old Bailey, while those who would abolish capital punishment must see that their case is already won. To oppose notoriously out-of-date laws is not to take part in a particularly uphill struggle. On the contrary, for an intellectual it is to take a point of view which will be approved by all his friends and acquaintances and which is sure to prevail one day. This is not to say that such causes should not be supported by intellectuals or that capital punishment and imprisonment for acts between consenting adults are right, but it is to suggest that the pursuit of these modest but welcome reforms is by no means equivalent to the great movements of the past either in the perils undergone or the satisfactions enjoyed by the pursuers. To that extent these campaigns are a make-believe, and those people who derive much emotional uplift from fighting them are easily contented.

The one recent campaign which does raise issues of a fundamental kind is that which has been carried on for the unilateral renunciation of nuclear weapons on the part of Great Britain and for a refusal to be a party to their use or a threat of their use by its allies. This certainly poses a moral issue—that habitually posed by pacifists—but it is an issue which has been much confused and bedraggled by being used as a weapon in the struggle for the leadership of the Labour Party and by support from some people who have not much use for pacifism but every use for the break-up of the Atlantic Alliance. That the Aldermaston marches should have evoked enthusiasm from a large number of young people as well as from the old war-horses of the left is not surprising. C.N.D. is, after all, the only thing of its kind: a campaign over a live moral issue whose importance can hardly be overestimated and which can be viewed in terms of absolute good and evil. Of course, what is really at stake is not so simple, and the anti-nuclear campaign can qualify as a pseudo-cause in the sense that the majority of its followers appear not to have the least idea of the implications of their actions. This is partly because the political

consequences of the campaign have been dwarfed by the 'Ban the Bomb' slogan, and partly because of the real ignorance of foreign affairs displayed by most of the nice, well-meaning people who take their hike to Aldermaston once a year.¹ However, even after Scarborough there were signs that some C.N.D. supporters had come to realize what they were doing (breaking up the Labour Party, furthering the careers of some ambitious politicians, destroying the Western alliance—the list is quite a long one), and had recoiled from that realization. And now that the purely pacifist element has split off from C.N.D. in the shape of the Committee of 100, it seems likely that the main body of the movement will slowly decline. Mr. Gaitskell's victory at Blackpool has already robbed them of their political importance, while Mr. Khrushchev has done something to lessen the moral imperative that started them off on the road to Aldermaston. 'Where is it now, the glory and the dream?'

There would be more to say about the anti-nuclear campaign (among other things it provides a fine example of the anti-American chauvinism mentioned above), but its relevance to my present argument is that its following would seem to be due to its being the only recent attempt to mobilize English intellectuals' considerable stocks of unutilized idealism in favour of a large and deceptively simple moral issue. And it is of some interest to see that this issue is moral and not political. In the thirties this would certainly have been otherwise. Then the idea was to get a Labour Government into power and the rest would follow. Now the distance from ordinary politics of most of C.N.D.'s supporters can be measured by the fact that its most immediate result has been to split the Labour Party and damage considerably its chances of electoral success. No better example could be offered of the gulf between undirected idealism and political possibility which has been opened by the decline of Great Britain's world power.

This is the nemesis of intellectuals whose idealism fails to start from a sufficient grounding in reality. Without a thorough appreciation of what has happened to England and the English their jeremiads are bound to consist of a succession of heavy hammer-blows landed well away from

¹ Incidentally, this side of the campaign was a good propaganda touch. The ethical significance of hiking and its connection with liberal politics is something that should be investigated; as anyone who has worked on the *Guardian* will know, to some people the mere sight of a rucksack is morally uplifting. Does this tradition date from Dr. Arnold's rambles in the Lake District or is it a more recent phenomenon?

the nail. Their criticism will degenerate into nagging, their idealism into cant and their benevolence into sentimentality. Instead of being subject to growth their ideas will be fashionable and cliquish—and hence sterile. One of the most terrifying phenomena of England today is the way in which young intellectuals starting their career with a natural rebelliousness tend to become fashionably 'shocking' and to remain petrified in attitudes which are highly profitable to them but which imply the abandonment of further intellectual or artistic development. At the end of his career the fashionable *frondeur* with his mixture of carefully publicized 'revolt' and orthodox chic will exploit his ideals for their entertainment value. What began as good intentions illumined by a spark of originality will end as good paragraphs in women's magazines.

In fact, there is only one way out of the web of unreality which we have spun from past illusions and present neuroses. We can set no objectives for our latent idealism until we have analysed Britain's changed position in the world and realized that this in itself sets limits to our ambitions. If we are not to spend our lives crying for a moon which we once thought we possessed, then we must fix our eyes on some possibly less desirable but more easily attainable object. And one field where it has become a matter of urgency for us to plot a new course within the bounds of the possible is that of our relations with other countries, the field of foreign policy.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

It is not yesterday, tradition, the past, which is the decisive, the determining force in a nation. . . . Nations are made and go on living by having a program for the future.

JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET

What can a little chap do?

PATRIOTIC POEM OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Whatever decline is to be observed in the power of Great Britain, this country still exists as a geographical, human and political entity facing many of the same difficulties as before. Its rulers, therefore, must try to find for it a place in the world and a direction in the world compatible with its altered position. And this is a problem which cannot be solved entirely by a prudent empiricism, or, indeed, by purely political means at all. It is not just a question of cutting commitments or arranging alliances, necessary though this may be. To find a new place for ourselves in the world will certainly involve a rethinking of our national destiny, a balancing of our assets in the light of possible world futures and painfully realistic decisions as to which of those assets will have a growing value in years to come and which of them are merely the husks of past advantage, the lumber that a country allows to rot over the years until it is nothing but a phrase in a *Times* leading article. But even more important than this winnowing of traditional policies must be the creation of new ones. And by 'policy' in this connection I do not mean the day-to-day expedients of foreign offices but the establishment of relationships within which a country can exist without suffocation and towards which it can direct the national sense of purpose which is essential if it is to avoid decay.

These matters are little discussed among, and their consequences hardly appreciated by, English intellectuals. When some foreign problem does attract their interest it is usually an isolated incident such as the Spanish Civil War or the founding of the state of Israel, and it is more valued for the opportunity it affords of identification with some alien but exciting cause than for its intrinsic significance in the pattern of international affairs. But the correct approach to the study of foreign affairs is not an emotional commitment to this or that piece on a particular section of the board, but a readiness to consider their relationships with an eye to quieting conflicts and straightening out tangles. This intellectuals have rarely been willing to do, and the very general failure in contemporary England to take foreign policy into consideration when discussing the country's future bears striking testimony to their neglect of the subject.

It is, therefore, difficult to speak of the attitudes of English intellectuals in the field of foreign policy. Such attitudes hardly exist, and reasons why this should be so are not far to seek. The liberal intellectual's distrust of power causes him to neglect the fact that there are such things as genuine clashes of national interests and that one object of diplomacy is to protect those of one's own country. Traditionally intellectuals have been blind to the realities of the conduct of foreign affairs, and this attitude was satisfactory as long as it could reasonably be believed by anyone that Great Britain had it in its power to give some substance to the aspirations of their idealism. But, once it became apparent that very little would be changed even if their views were allowed to dictate British foreign policy, there was a general turning of backs on the outside world. This tendency towards self-isolation was abetted by the physical barriers cutting Britain off from other countries during and after the war, whose effects can still be seen in the ignorance of our nearest neighbours, the countries of Western Europe, on the part of a large section of English intellectuals—an ignorance which has been strikingly revealed during the mounting discussion of Britain's entry into Europe, the one occasion since the war when an issue of foreign policy has excited such sustained debate. More usually it is the lack of controversy which has been the significantly distressing symptom.

To talk of Britain's 'place in the world' is to talk of foreign affairs, an area of knowledge which is usually considered to be that of the

expert, the man who knows all about other countries and sometimes even speaks their languages. As a subject it is generally treated apart from English domestic politics—so much so that a book like Mr. Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* does not touch on it at all, though its title would have appeared to require this. The division into 'at home' and 'abroad' is obviously convenient, but has the considerable disadvantage of concealing the fact that even less today than at other times in its history can Britain be said to have a 'domestic' policy in the total sense of the word, that is, the possibility of pursuing various domestic aims unaffected by outside circumstance. Regrettably enough, almost every area of our national life is at the mercy of such circumstances. English Socialism is not likely to have much future if foreign affairs are ill conducted, and all the reforms which Mr. Crosland suggests can be rendered impossible, all the contingencies with which he deals radically changed, by developments over which we have little control other than to make ourselves as ready as we can to meet them quickly and expeditiously when they arise. We frequently hear of the pound being depressed on the world market by the actions of wicked little men in Zürich, but it is not only currency speculators who exert their malevolent influence upon us. The governments of new states may wish—quite rightly—to secure better terms for their raw materials. German industrialists may be rather cleverer than we are in capturing the Latin-American market. Russian threats may force us to spend more on armaments. A recession in the U.S.A. may hit our exports to that country. And there is always the menace of a war between the two world blocs—a war which it would be disastrous for us to have to fight, but the best hope of avoiding which lies in a willingness to contemplate that disaster.

The fact is that, as a country, we are exceptionally vulnerable, both economically as a trading nation subject to the ups and downs of a shifting world conjuncture and in competition with countries of greater resources than our own, and, politically and strategically, as a small, heavily populated island situated off the coast of a continental land mass, whose political development we ignore at our peril, but can hardly control. At the beginning of the last chapter I mentioned our present defence dilemma, which implies the obsolescence of the methods which in the past have served to maintain England in safety on the edge of Europe, but the economic requirements of a trading nation are not less important

in determining foreign policy.¹ Indeed, the near-impossibility of finding a satisfactory way out of the tangle which nuclear weapons have made of strategy has tended to make them more important. If war is to come we shall be doomed anyway, but in peace we must trade to live—a process which demands an active and intelligent diplomacy in many parts of the world. If we are to live, in short, *we must live on our wits*, and much of that disagreeably strenuous procedure will come down to an effort to arrange our policies abroad in a realistic manner, while recognizing that they must take priority over more parochial concerns and that on their results will depend the pattern of our life at home.

With this in mind, it is sometimes depressing to read pronouncements in Parliament or in the Press whose only effect on the public for whom they are intended can be to hide from them the precariousness of their country's situation. 'Britain's ties with the Commonwealth', 'Britain's world leadership', 'Britain's special position with America'—these phrases represent varying degrees of reality; they are rooks or knights or pawns upon our diplomatic chessboard, but they are often treated as though the game in question were draughts rather than chess with all the pieces enjoying equal solidity and power or, worse still, as though the game were life itself and the possibility of overturning the board or changing the rules quite beyond an opponent's capacity. The worst offender, of course, is the Beaverbrook Press. Propagating a nationalism which has long ceased to have any relation to facts and which would prove disastrous if it were allowed to affect the making of policy, the final result of its swaggering and fantasy is merely to hinder the adoption of realistic policies and to generate an xenophobia and self-pity, a nagging hatred of foreigners and a lachrymose bewailing of Britain's betrayal by them, for which it is not hard to find precedents in recent history. And, at the opposite end of the scale, the honourable platitudes to be found in liberal newspapers—'Britain's moral influence', 'a multi-racial Commonwealth' etc.—camouflage a total vagueness about their value considered as anything other than decent aspirations.² As will, I hope,

¹ 'In these circumstances the essentials of British foreign policy are bound to be basically two: trade and defence, particularly the defence of trade.' Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

² In the *Observer* of June 4th, 1961, there was a comment on the fall in Britain's gold and dollar reserves. The editorialist deplored 'this continuing economic weakness' and went on to say that there had been 'a humiliating example' of its effect: the fact that Britain had been able to offer only two-thirds of the extra help promised to

become clear in the course of this chapter, I too believe in the possibility of Britain's 'moral influence' (which I should hesitate to call 'leadership'), but between the belief and the reality is the gap which separates the enunciation of the proposition 'God is love' from the proselytizing efforts of a missionary. The connecting factor is power: that is, hard work and hard thinking.

DIMINISHED POWER

In fact, it is easy enough to measure the extent to which traditional conceptions of British foreign policy have been undermined by our diminution in power. At the beginning of 1907 Sir Eyre Crowe, then Senior Clerk at the Foreign Office, wrote a memorandum which has often been quoted as an authoritative statement of what then seemed to be some permanent characteristics of British policy. Starting from England's position 'as an island state with vast overseas colonies and dependencies, whose existence and survival as an independent community are inseparably bound up with the possession of preponderant sea power', Crowe recognized that a country in such a position could not resist general hostility on the part of other countries and must therefore try to direct its policy so that it should be 'closely identified with the primary and vital interests of a majority, or as many as possible, of the other nations'. And he went on to deduce that, since the most vital of interests was national independence, 'England, more than any non-insular power, has a direct and positive interest in the maintenance of the independence of nations, and therefore must be the natural enemy of any country threatening the independence of others. . . .' The most efficacious system for maintaining national independence was the balance of power, 'and it has become almost a historical truism to identify England's secular policy with the maintenance of this balance by throwing her weight now in this scale and

India by Western Germany. 'After this, any claim to British leadership in what is, after all, the most important underdeveloped country of the Commonwealth seems a sorry joke.' Quite, but, in the first place, it is rather idiotic to make any such claim in the circumstances which have prevailed in Britain since the war. And, in the second, the moral would seem to be that one must set one's own economic house in order before being able to help others. If the *Observer* devoted as much space to ways of solving the balance of payments problem as it does to questions arising out of aid to underdeveloped countries it would be putting the horse at any rate alongside the cart, and there might be some prospect of the animal being able to pull it in the not-too-distant future.

now in that, but ever on the side opposed to the political dictatorship of the strongest single state or group at a given time'.¹

Leaving aside the moral overtones of this exposition of British policy (and it was hardly to be expected that any foreigner would take quite the same roseate view of England's 'throwing her weight now in this scale and now in that'), the attitude set out in Sir Eyre Crowe's memorandum was one of habitual aloofness from European politics tempered by decisive interventions when it looked as though they were becoming too one-sided. Seven years after the statement of these principles they were to become obsolete. After 1918, so far from being free to intervene to redress the balance of power, Great Britain was committed to the tilting of the scales in its own direction. And after the Second World War English statesmen had to recognize that not only were they unable to throw their weight 'now in this scale and now in that' but that they weighed very little in the scale which they had chosen.²

The traditional view of British foreign policy lies in ruins, but so far little has been done to replace it by anything permanent. Since the war long-term foreign-policy thinking has been at something of a discount. From 1945 onwards we have staggered from international crisis to international crisis, acquiring temporary commitments and expedient alliances, but never asking ourselves how they fitted in with any possible longer view of the position we might hope to occupy in the world, say, of A.D. 2000. Any Foreign Secretary, were he to be required to state the long-term objectives of British policy, might reply by mentioning the ending of the cold war, disarmament, the successful completion of Britain's disengagement from Africa and Asia and a host of other worthy aims. But these intentions, respectable though they are, are not quite what I have in mind. We must find a new place in the world and to do that we must find a new task in the world, something of which we can say that in ten years' time we shall have made such and such progress, something that will harness our latent idealism as the British Empire used to, something creative and therefore capable of stimulating organic growth. And, since there is no possibility of finding such work to do in isolation, we

¹ *British Documents on the Origin of the War 1898-1914*, edited by G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, Vol. III (H.M.S.O., 1928), pp. 402-3.

² A certain amount of English neutralism is due to a hankering after a return to the old 'balance of power' conception of British foreign policy. Where its advocates make their mistake is in overestimating the possibility of isolated action by this country.

must look for it in international groupings which shall not merely be new in themselves but also of a new type. We must seek in our temporary alliances for the foundations of a permanent community, and we must reject those associations which are not susceptible of such development in favour of those that are. We can compensate for our own sudden weakness and also give ourselves a new sense of national purpose by agreeing to take our place (an important place) as part of a larger whole. How, when and where this integration is to be achieved is the most important decision facing not only the makers of British foreign policy but also the country as a whole. Without some such decision we face a decline which may be slow but will be all the more irrevocable for that. 'Nations', wrote Ortega y Gasset, 'are made and go on living by having a program for the future.'¹ At present there is little sign that the people of Great Britain (as distinct from its government) are conscious of the need for such a programme. Yet without it we shall decay.

BRITAIN AND N.A.T.O.

At the time of writing Britain is involved in three international groupings of different types and existing for different purposes—what Sir Anthony Eden once called the 'three concentric circles' within which British foreign policy is contained. It is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; that is, it belongs to a defensive military alliance inspired by the U.S.A. and directed against a possible threat from the Soviet Union. It is the leading country in the British Commonwealth of Nations, an association of countries which owes its existence to the historical fact of a British Empire which is just now completing the transformation of territories governed from London into independent states. And, geographically, it is part of a Western Europe attempting to unite itself economically and politically, and is by now well on the road to membership in the European Economic Community and a consequent strengthening of ties with its most immediate neighbours. All these relationships have their *raison d'être*, but the question I should like to ask about them here is how far they provide a basis for a new and permanent British position in the world of the type I have already described. For, even if they in themselves cannot form the basis of any such relationship,

¹ José Ortega y Gasset, *Invertebrate Spain* (Allen and Unwin, 1937), p. 26.

they may nevertheless be of help in bringing about conditions in which it can be created. Will these groupings become more or less important as times goes on? Are they of the past or of the future? Does the idea we now have of their importance correspond with the real situation? If something can be done to answer such questions as these then it may be possible to see how Britain can arrive at some lasting conception of its national role, and how best it can affect the course of world affairs in its own interests and in those of its distinctive set of political beliefs.

I would take it to be essential that Great Britain should exert some degree of influence in the world today, though I believe that that influence can be effectively exercised only through participation in some unit possessing more power than is available to the United Kingdom by itself. The prospect of dwindling to another Denmark or Holland might not be so frightening in itself—indeed, as I have said earlier on, it is not really frightening at all—but were Britain's power and world position to be reduced very much further at the present speed the result would be very different. Our population is too big, our economic structure too unbalanced, for such a change to be possible without great hardship. Sweden lost an empire in the Baltic; Holland has lost one in Indonesia; but only for a short time was either state regarded as being among the major European powers. A comparably total loss of world position on Britain's part would bring into question our ability to survive and to support our present population. It is not only for psychological reasons that we must find a new role in the international stage. We may possibly (personally, I hope we will) become as clean and well ordered a country as Denmark, but it will be a Denmark on a bigger scale, and that changes everything. I believe the creation by the Scandinavian countries of a decent way of living for their peoples to be one of the great achievements of the twentieth century, and one which we should try to imitate. But this achievement was due in part to isolation from the destructive currents of world history and to the existence of sufficient, if not exhaustive, natural resources. In Britain neither condition is fulfilled, and, though we may evolve towards a Scandinavian way of living, we should prejudice that evolution and our own future if our retreat from the exercise of power became a rout. Unlike the Scandinavians before 1940, we cannot take up a stance of isolation in order to cultivate our garden. What we should do is to realize the importance of the best possible use of that garden, but as between exerting a preponderant influence in the world

and exerting no influence at all there is a middle course: a short-term pursuit of policies appropriate to our means and a long-term search for a system of international relationships which will enable us to expand those means. It is when a country is besotted with visions of past grandeur that it is unable to use even that remaining strength which it possesses. Great Britain can neither dominate the world nor cut itself off from it, however agreeable such a policy of isolation may appear.

The truth of this assertion becomes clear from the moment that we examine the first of the associations on which our present foreign policy is based. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was brought into existence by the threat of Russian expansion. Its immediate cause may have been the *putsch* engineered by the Czech Communists early in 1948, but this was only a final confirmation of Western Europe's feeling that it was directly menaced by a Soviet policy of blackmail and subversion backed by what seemed at the time the overwhelming strength of the Red Army. And this was a threat which no amount of isolationism on the part of a British government could have prevented us from sharing. By the fact of our geographical position we were vulnerable to it, however much we might have wished to be left alone to develop our Welfare State. It was the realization of this peril and of the fact that America was the only possible ally which could help Western Europe defend itself that caused the British Labour Government—very much to its credit, since the very idea of a military alliance went against the pre-conceptions of many of its members—to help to bring N.A.T.O. into existence.

The object of the operation was, therefore, primarily the defence of Western Europe.¹ Only, since this implied defence against internal subversion as well as against military aggression from outside, one of the first tasks before the alliance was the rebuilding of the ruined economies

¹ The North Atlantic Treaty in its original form (i.e. before the signature of the protocol of October 17th, 1951, admitting Greece and Turkey) defined the area in which it was operative fairly narrowly: '... an armed attack on one or more of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France, on the occupation forces of any Party in Europe, on the islands under the jurisdiction of any Party in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer or on the vessels or aircraft in this area of any of the Parties.' Article VI of the North Atlantic Treaty quoted in *Atlantic Alliance, N.A.T.O.'s Role in a Free World* (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London and New York, 1952), pp. 154-7.

of European member states. This considerable aim was achieved, largely through the machinery of the Marshall Plan and the Organization for European Economic Co-operation, both of which, though not totally identified with N.A.T.O., formed an economic infrastructure for it, and, of course, such a process of co-operative reconstruction meant that N.A.T.O. would become rather more than a mere military alliance. It would be an alliance of a type which had sometimes existed in wartime, but not in peace: an alliance where integration of effort might be extended to other fields than the purely military, and in which there was implied some surrender of sovereignty on the part of the participants. If the European Defence Community had become a reality the sinking of national differences within the framework of the alliance might have proceeded further than it has, but, in fact, N.A.T.O. has not fulfilled political hopes which at one time seemed reasonable enough. A number of not altogether unexpected factors were working to draw the allies apart. The entry into N.A.T.O. of Greece and Turkey made it less of a natural unit, national jealousies prevented the emergence of a European army, and, above all, a real divergence in interests between America and its European allies began to be felt almost as soon as the pact was signed.

Though the Atlantic Alliance was, in theory, a European affair, yet it was clear that, were America to enter into conflict with either the U.S.S.R. or China in some other part of the world, Britain, France and their companions among the smaller states of Western Europe would be involved and probably committed despite themselves. And, since they did not wish to be concerned in a war caused by what was often regarded as an unnecessarily intransigent American policy in the Far East, these countries have successively watched the evolution of events in Korea, Viet-Nam and Laos with nervousness and an apprehensive eye on Washington. Once, indeed, at the time of Suez, the roles were changed, and it was the U.S.A. that restrained Britain and France from a risky adventure, but usually it has been the other way round. Any hint of a tough policy in South-East Asia has always brought on a shower of cautious admonitions from London and (after the end of the war in Indo-China) from Paris as well. Mr. Attlee's sudden journey to Washington—wrongly supposed at the time to have had for result the prevention of the use of atom bombs in Korea—and the Geneva conferences on Indo-China and Laos mark the moments when this distrust of American

policy produced active protests which were listened to by the U.S. government.¹

It follows that the part played by Great Britain in N.A.T.O. has been two-fold. On the one hand, we have liked to see ourselves as America's most loyal ally, a country whose community of interests with the U.S.A. was firmly based on a multitude of cultural and personal ties, not the least important of which was a common language. On the other, we have regarded ourselves for that very reason as singularly well qualified to convey good advice, to make a plea for caution here and give a nod of approbation there, to hold America back from the bad and encourage it towards the good. In short, we have cast ourselves for the part of the candid friend whose candour is forgiven (and even appreciated) because of his loyalty. It is a part which has sometimes seemed impressive, infuriating though it must often have been to our European allies, and which has certainly won us a good deal of approval in the uncommitted states. However, it is questionable whether it was equally appreciated in Washington, where it must often have looked like an old-world attempt to leave the dirty work to the U.S.A., and, since our continuance in the role must depend on tacit American consent, this is not without its importance.

Certainly, Mr. Macmillan's attempt to extend the function of candid friend into one of mediator between America and Russia, thereby adopting the stance of what might be called 'the marching wing' of N.A.T.O., was not appreciated at all. Indeed, there was more than a little unreality about it. Russia would, no doubt, be delighted to detach Great Britain from N.A.T.O., but any real negotiation on world issues must be done with America, since only America has the power to grant those concessions which, any Russian statesman must hope, will result from such an encounter. Only a genuine 'softening' of Russian aims and methods would allow us much freedom of manoeuvre between Washington and Moscow. Otherwise we are attracted to the one, and inevitably repelled by the other, of two world poles, whose fields of force we cannot neutralize and can hardly affect.²

¹ No doubt such protests will also be heard in the future about American policies in Latin America. Castro appears likely to be the first swallow of a considerable flock, and, if the methods of coping with them include economic and military pressure, America's European allies may find its actions dangerously reckless.

² I would not wish to criticize Mr. Macmillan's journey to Moscow. It took place at a time when there was a complete lack of American policy, and when it must have

The 'candid friend' view of Britain's place in the world, which seems to have been the dominant theme since 1945, has often been useful and usually respectable. Whether or not British views had any very decisive effect on the dismissal of General MacArthur, it was right to protest against actions which resembled those of a Viceroy of India with a 'forward policy' on the North-West Frontier. North-West Frontiers are even touchier affairs now than they were then, and statements of that fact proceeding from this side of the Atlantic may well have strengthened President Truman's hand in dealing with his recalcitrant proconsul. The danger of such an idea of ourselves and our part in world politics is that it may lead to an admiring contemplation of our own influence even when it is precisely nil. Any British Prime Minister who goes to Washington expressing alarm at American policy is sure of a good reception from the electorate. They cannot know, and hardly seem to care, what he does when he gets there. The magic word 'consultations' covers everything. It provides at once the assurance and the justification of our position as a great power. It could even hide the features of the busybody and the parasite. 'Save, save, oh! save me from the Candid Friend.'

Let me make myself clear: I have no objection to British statesmen pointing out what they take to be mistakes in the policies of our major ally. But I do dislike and distrust the unjustified complacency with which we regard our 'special position' in relation to America, and the way in which we are mesmerized by our desire for equality into believing that we have attained it and into accepting the ritual of meeting, communiqué and Press conference as solid achievements. And this at a moment when our contribution to the alliance in men, arms and money has been cut, and our thinking about our own defence is so muddled that it swings from a total reliance on American strength to an equally arbitrary distrust of it. To play the part of the 'candid friend' is no substitute for the actions of friendship, and it is on these rather than on any flattering conception of our capacity for good counsel that our influence in Washington will depend.

There is, however, another side to N.A.T.O. than that which seemed useful that someone should take the initiative in talking to Mr. Khrushchev. Moreover, coming after the break-down of the Maudling negotiation on the Common Market, there were special reasons why the British government should have been interested in discovering whether there was any possibility of better relations with the U.S.S.R.

envisages Great Britain as America's most faithful and most critical ally. The North Atlantic Treaty could develop into a North Atlantic Union, and voices have been raised to say that it should do so.¹ I sympathize with this aim, but it is difficult to believe that it is something which is likely to happen in the immediate future or even very soon at all. The surrender of sovereignty required by any such arrangement might well be consented to by the European states involved, but it does not seem probable that the U.S.A. or Canada would be prepared to go so far. No doubt the scope of the North Atlantic Treaty could be extended from purely military matters to cover other areas of policy. N.A.T.O. already has its economic aspects, and it could also deal with cultural and educational co-operation. But common political institutions and a common foreign policy would be too difficult on an Atlantic scale at the moment. In the early 1950s a Chatham House study group could conclude that 'the avowed goal of the governments of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is to create an Atlantic Community. This has repeatedly been stated to be their ultimate objective.'² Since then it is Western Europe that has made the running, and repetitions of Atlantic faith have become less frequent. Atlantic Union may come one day, but, as President Kennedy has realized, it will almost certainly be after the emergence of common European political institutions.

N.A.T.O., therefore, presents two prospects as far as Britain is concerned. One is soothing to our national vanity and, therefore, delusive, and the other, while presenting more substantial hopes for the future, is unlikely to become a practical proposition very soon. Eventually we may arrive at an Atlantic Union, but before that we shall find the part of 'candid friend' a diminishing asset, and it may not take long for it to disappear altogether, lingering on the Western horizon only as a mirage to flatter and mislead our statesmen.

However, the conclusion that our long-term connections with N.A.T.O. are part mirage and part pilgrimage to a very distant city does not make the alliance either useless or unnecessary in the immediate

¹ Most recently by H. C. Allen in his book *The Anglo-American Predicament* (Macmillan, 1960). The Herter-Clayton plan for American association with the Common Market is also a revival of the North Atlantic Community idea, and this has now been taken up by President Kennedy, whose concept of 'interdependence', however, presupposes an integrated Western Europe rather than a 'special' Anglo-American relationship.

² *Atlantic Alliance, N.A.T.O.'s Role in a Free World*, p. 145.

future. Even those most opposed to N.A.T.O. recognize the confusion which would ensue were Britain to try to leave it—a confusion which they would welcome as stimulating to the spiritual glands.¹ The purpose of N.A.T.O. is, in fact, the same as when it was signed in 1949: to prevent Russia from walking into Western Europe. And the decisive argument against regarding the treaty as an encumbrance is the very real ignorance of Russian intentions in which Western governments find themselves. Supporters of C.N.D. are in effect asking the inhabitants of Western Europe to bet on their own view of Russian policy being the correct one, and on there being no risk involved in presenting the Soviet Union with the spectacle of a power vacuum on its Western frontier. Given the eccentricity of left-wing judgements on foreign policy, this is a bet which I for one am not willing to take. International groupings may change, but they will do so over a very long period, and, in the meantime, any sudden attempt to realize the unilateralist dream of a London–Belgrade–New Delhi axis would be more likely to create a war than avoid one. N.A.T.O. must continue until another defensive combination is put in its place, and the frivolity of the anti-N.A.T.O. forces in British politics can be measured by the fact that they have never tried to suggest ways in which a reasonably viable neutralism could be brought about.²

BRITAIN AND THE COMMONWEALTH

The second power complex in which we are involved is the British Commonwealth, an association of nations theoretically united by common ideals, legally joined by the Queen's position as its head, and more

¹ 'The opportunity for a revolutionary breakthrough might as possibly arise from international as from local causes. Should the protest in Britain gain sufficient strength to force our country out of N.A.T.O., consequences will follow in rapid succession. The Americans might reply with economic sanctions. Britain would be faced with the alternatives of compliance or of a far-reaching reorientation of trade. The dilemma would agitate the consciousness of the whole people. . . . Ideological and political antagonisms would sharpen . . .' etc., etc. E. P. Thompson in *Out of Apathy* (Stevens and Sons, 1960), p. 307. This statement represents in succinct form the theory held by the politically alert fraction of C.N.D. However, it is a little astonishing that, holding as they do the worst possible opinion of the Pentagon and State Department, the theorists of the New Left should be so confident that America will stop at economic sanctions. Unconsciously they make the assumption that the U.S.A. will be held back by scruples from getting really tough with Great Britain—an assumption which nothing in their view of America justifies.

² Communists presumably would advocate a simple switching of alliances, but I am not talking about them here.

practically pushed together by various economic interests and the propulsion of sentiment and habit. The existence of such an association is to a great extent the result of historical accident. Having taken possession of a large number of disparate territories throughout the world, Great Britain, when the time came to give them up, was fortunate in having at its disposal a device which, from the time of the Durham Report (1839) onwards, allowed a relatively painless abandonment of power. To that extent the Commonwealth has been a useful fiction to cover a real disengagement of responsibility,¹ and its adoption as an expedient may have been due to the existence of a precedent which showed what disastrous consequences flowed from an attempt to maintain a grip on colonies against the will of their populations. It might be said that 'No taxation without representation' was the founding principle of the British Commonwealth.

With the American example in mind it was easy to give Dominion status to Australia, Canada, New Zealand and, finally, to South Africa, so that when it came to the turn of India and Pakistan to claim their independence it was possible to proceed on the analogy of what had already been done. New African states followed quickly after negotiations along the same well-worn lines—with the slight difference that, whereas up to that time Commonwealth countries had been fairly large and often geographically self-contained units, in Africa the new frontiers were arbitrary owing to their existence to the nineteenth-century grab for Africa. This fact (and, of course, the same is true of the states of the French Community and the ex-Belgian Congo) has had for result that Balkanization of Africa which has already begun to complicate international relations and is bound to do so even more in the future.

The sequence of events by which states with populations (or voters)

¹ One of the most percipient analyses of this process occurs in H. G. Wells's novel *The New Machiavelli* which appeared in 1911: 'It does not follow that we shall be driven catastrophically from India. That was my earlier mistake. . . . We may be able to abandon India with an air of still remaining there. It is our new method. We train our future rulers in the public schools to have a very wholesome respect for strength, and as soon as a power arises in India in spite of us . . . we shall be willing to deal with it. We may or may not have a war, but our governing class will be quick to learn when we are beaten. Then they will repeat our South African diplomacy, and will arrange for some settlement that will abandon the reality, such as it is, and preserve the semblance of power. The conqueror *de facto* will become the new "loyal Briton", and the democracy at home will be invited to celebrate our recession—triumphantly.' *The New Machiavelli* (London, 1911), p. 357.

of mainly European origin were followed into independence by Asian and African countries has, of course, changed the nature of Britain's relationship to the Commonwealth. Originally it was envisaged as a federation of like-minded countries, a family in which the younger members were always ready to spring to the motherland's defence, and Great Britain was always ready to oblige with sage advice and welcome assistance.¹ Of course, the reality usually fell short of the ideal, and the methodical imperialism of Joseph Chamberlain was an attempt to systematize a power complex which, he felt, might compensate for Britain's own weakness when compared with continental states.² Still, the family image was a powerful one, and at every Jubilee or Coronation there were politicians and journalists ready to revive it. Since 1945, however, things have changed: now one of our most popular ideals is that of inter-racial harmony, and the Commonwealth is rarely mentioned without the addition of the adjective 'multi-racial'. Thus partisans of the old imperial ways are to be found alongside liberals attached to an ideal of racial equality whenever an opportunity occurs to deplore the abandonment of the Commonwealth, an alliance which, however, does not appear to worry either side.³

¹ It is this conception of the Commonwealth which we find in those dramatic poems of Kipling, where each separate contingent from distant parts of the empire (as it was still called) gives tongue in order to pay tribute to a common ideal of service. The ideal, which also inspired numerous plans for Imperial Parliaments and federal institutions, was remarkably resistant to change. In *Mr. Standfast*, a novel published after the end of the First World War, John Buchan could make an American describe the Commonwealth (and the U.S.A.!) as follows: 'It's like a lot of boys that are getting on in the world and are a bit jealous and stand-offish with each other. But they're all at home with the old man who used to warm them up with a hickory cane, even though sometimes in their haste they call him a standpatter.' It seems a little unlikely that, at that date, an Australian or New Zealander would have looked at the Commonwealth connection in those terms, but Buchan had been one of Milner's South African 'young men', and his past probably weighed upon him as it did upon others of the group.

² 'It seems to me that the tendency of the time is to throw all power into the hands of the greater empires, and the minor kingdoms—those which are non-progressive—seem to be destined to fall into a secondary and subordinate place. But if Greater Britain remains united, no empire in the world can ever surpass it in area, population, in wealth or in the diversity of its resources.' Speech by Joseph Chamberlain to the Royal Colonial Institute, March 31st, 1897, quoted in *Africa and the Victorians: the official mind of imperialism*, by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny (Macmillan, 1961), p. 404.

³ The contradiction can be expressed by saying that the opposition to a 'desertion' of the Commonwealth in favour of Europe includes both those most in favour of, and those most opposed to, the Suez expedition.

The role of the Commonwealth in Great Britain's idea of its own place in the world is, therefore, two-fold. There is the old imperialism and the new benevolence.¹ And while the secular vision of garrisons and gunboats, Pax Britannica enforced by young officials with swagger sticks and the Union Jack above the cantonments is now fairly obviously out of date, the new theory of Britain acting as a sort of middleman between the white nations of Europe and America and the states of Afro-Asia provides a more lively, more modern, but not necessarily less delusory substitute.

This 'bridge' conception of Britain's part in international affairs is based on something of the same hypothesis of our superior political wisdom as is that of our mediatory function as between America and Russia. However, it is rather less intangible. The Commonwealth is a useful association in its limited way, and it is particularly useful in that it includes peoples of every continent as no other political organization save the world-wide league of Communist parties does. The ejection of South Africa from its midst has increased the emphasis on its role as a solvent of tensions between the West and the 'uncommitted' countries. India has become the government which every English statesman hesitates to offend, taking over the position once occupied by the U.S.A., perhaps to be superseded in its turn by Nigeria. For the moment the Commonwealth really does provide a bridge, however wobbly, between countries of vastly different habits and traditions.

This position is both a practical and a respectable one, which contributes to the advancement of the West's immediate interests and to world stability. But from Britain's own point of view it has the disadvantage of making no real contribution towards solving the problems of this most difficult period in our history. We need allies and an economic hinterland, and a multi-racial Commonwealth can supply neither. Moreover, it may well be a purely transitional grouping. Increasingly the new African and Asian states will be drawn into their local political struggles

¹ Not that the benevolence was merely new. To a man like Fitzjames Stephen 'the great British achievement was the establishment of peace "from Adam's Bridge to Peshawur", and its only historical parallel was the *pax Romana*'. (Stokes, op. cit., p. 300.) To this not unreasonable claim H. G. Wells replied by asking whether it was our business 'to preserve the rupees and virgins of Lower Bengal in a sort of magic inconclusiveness'. (Wells, op. cit., p. 356.) It was something of an urchin's question, but succeeded in indicating one very weak spot in the imperial system: the suspension of political development brought by foreign—even, I am afraid, by U.N.—rule.

for power and prestige. Increasingly their internal systems of government will tend to diverge from the pattern of parliamentary and common-law institutions which we bequeathed to them. Increasingly their intellectual élite and governing class will become less Europeanized, stranger and more impenetrable to us. Even the utility of close contact between a Western European state and Asian and African countries is bound to diminish. 'Colonialism' is rapidly disappearing, and, once it is gone for good, relations between Europe and America, on the one hand, and Asia and Africa on the other should lose their special tension. The political advantages of the Commonwealth will grow smaller as the areas of post-colonial sensitivity become callous, while, until that day comes, the gains to be gathered from them will be mitigated by the fact that, whereas, from our own point of view, our position is that of repentant imperialists, in our ex-colonies it is the imperialism rather than the repentance on which we are judged.

The harsh fact is that the Commonwealth cannot supply Britain's need for partners in a positive policy. The Commonwealth countries, with their heterogeneous interests, traditions and ideals, may just possibly agree on general moral principles or even on things which they would wish not to do nor to see done by others. It is when it comes to the taking of any political initiative that the divergences appear and by their appearance cause immobility. Since the war the Commonwealth as an entity has exerted only a negative influence in the world. One can say that things might have been worse without it, but it would be difficult to point to any occasion on which it has changed events in a positive sense. Indeed, it can hardly be said to have acted at all.¹

We must conclude, therefore, that, useful as the Commonwealth has been and may be, it does not afford any hope of providing a sufficient basis for Britain's world position either now or in the future. The centrifugal pull which at present makes it impossible to speak of 'a Commonwealth policy' can only increase in strength in the future. Politically, militarily, economically and culturally this loose confederation is bound to relax its connecting bands still further in the years to come, and no amount of conciliation or aid from London will make much difference.²

¹ Cf. Woodhouse, *op. cit.*, p. 227: 'Politically, the Commonwealth can only be defined as that group of countries with which Britain conducts her relations through the Commonwealth Relations Office instead of the Foreign Office.'

² As for economic ties Sir Alfred Zimmern could already write in 1934 that '... economic interests are a dividing rather than an integrating element in the

To think otherwise is chimerical. The point has, of course, been brought home to us by the Commonwealth Conference of September 1962. The pettiness, hypocrisy and egotism displayed on that occasion by some of the assembled Prime Ministers should make it quite clear to even the most devoted supporter of imperial ties how flimsy the bonds of sentiment are when confronted with the brute facts of material interest. Moreover, there are signs that this spectacle has shocked the British public with the result that the Commonwealth may lose even its emotive power rather sooner than once seemed likely to be the case.

To say this is not to deny a residual utility to the Commonwealth for some years to come, nor does it mean that we should not do our best to attend to the needs and to heed the opinions of its African and Asian members. But we cannot and should not think of our political future in terms of an increasingly close relationship with the Commonwealth when the reality is likely to be the contrary of this pleasing prospect. And were the Commonwealth to hypnotize us into a fascinated contemplation of an irretrievable past or an unreal future, then I for one would prefer to see it dissolve itself as quickly as is compatible with the avoidance of disaster. The assets which we have inherited from our imperial days are genuine enough, but they would do us irreparable damage if we were to take them for more sterling than they are.

BRITAIN AND EUROPE

The third grouping to which Great Britain is tied is Western Europe—though here perhaps the use of the word ‘tied’ is a little ambiguous. For what binds us to Western Europe is something more profound than mutual self-defence or historical association, however strong the argument may be for considering these two as connecting forces. Here we are committed by geography before being so by politics, economics or strategy. Thirty miles away from our coasts exists a land mass containing a number of states from whose future we cannot dissociate ourselves. 1940, which misleads so many of those who consider this problem, can never be repeated. It was the heroic moment of the last of those struggles in which

Commonwealth. It is perhaps the principal merit of the Ottawa Conference to have made this clear once and for all and thus to have dissipated the “sentimental atmosphere” in which this subject has long been enveloped, at least in Great Britain.’ (Zimmern, *op. cit.*, p. 48.) So much for ‘Empire Free Trade’!

our position as an island gave us time, the time we shall never have again.¹ Nowadays, nobody can seriously think that a conqueror who controlled France, the Low Countries and Germany would not also control England. Before in our history we have taken our fate to be bound up with the friendship or hostility of the powers occupying the coastline of northern Europe. Now we have better reasons than ever for thinking so.

Faced by the necessity of friendly neighbours in Western Europe, there are two theoretical ways in which we might ensure that this condition should be fulfilled. First, by dominating those neighbours: a feat we have never been able to achieve at the zenith of our historical power and which is out of the question for us in our present diminished state. Secondly, by entering into a close association with them: a policy far surer in its results and far more peaceful in its methods.

Such an association with Western Europe is therefore necessary for our survival, and it could be maintained that the need is supplied by the existence of N.A.T.O. which provides a military and political system of security assuring us of allies in our immediate vicinity. However, what I am discussing here is not merely a transitory system of alliances such as the *Entente Cordiale* or the Triple Alliance, but a continuing framework within which Great Britain can plan its future as a power of the second rank. Such a framework, I believe, could be provided by the European idea, but if we adopt this we must realize that to be of service to us what is called 'entry into Europe' must be regarded as the beginning of a biological process of symbiosis. It is the creation of a Europe which in the long run will have sufficient political opinions in common to evolve a unified foreign policy that will be of real help to us and the world. At the moment of writing we are negotiating for membership of the Common Market, spurred on by our economic difficulties, but that is not the end of the matter. Although those politicians who are in favour of a 'European' approach have not said so (and it is difficult to blame them;

¹ Perhaps some of the air of confusion which has marked English foreign policy since the war is due to a sudden forced passage from the relative deliberation of an insular foreign policy to the quicker tempo and more sensitive reactions of what Professor Gerhardt Ritter has called a 'continental' position. Increased vulnerability of frontiers tends to render diplomacy more feverish, more liable to paranoia and, hence, more inclined to use the methods of power politics against opponents. Our 'policies' are not quite 'continental' yet, but it does seem that the old methods are not responding particularly well to the necessities of a more exposed situation.

the application to join was a considerable act of political courage in itself), the real issue posed by our association in Europe is that expressed in the saying that it is better to be the first man in a village rather than the second man in Rome. Only for nations the moral is reversed. Isolation, the inability to participate in other than parochial politics, has a very bad effect on them unless they are very large countries indeed. They become narrow. Their intellectual life decays. They live on memories of the past, receiving no stimulus from outside that might lead them to undertake a task of national renovation for which they do not perceive the need. In these circumstances there will indeed be those who are able to profit from the situation. Some of them will tell their fellow citizens that their village really is Rome; others that it is much better than Rome. For them renovation is a thing to be feared, since it will mean the abandonment of cherished prejudices and the painful necessity of elaborating newer ideas than the ones they have held all their lives, to which they owe their career and present position. Such voices from the past are now to be heard every day in the newspapers and on the political platform. If we wish to live a life worth living we must not heed them.

An increasingly intimate association with Western Europe will provide a remedy for the frustrations arising from the loss of British power which have been described in my last chapter. Inclusion in a larger unit not only offers some hope of solving our difficult economic situation, with the consequent release from the sense of strain and stringency to which we have been subjected since the war, but will give back purpose to our consciousness of our own position in the world.¹ Since 1945 the wheels of British policy have turned in the void, kicking up a lot of dust, no doubt, and giving a convincing optical illusion of action, but fundamentally failing to mesh with the intricate mechanisms that

¹ Of course, it will offer hope of economic improvement only if as a nation we react creatively to the stimulus it will provide. If, on the other hand, we are defeated by the pressures it releases, then we face disaster. However, since this appears to be the economic choice which faces us anyhow, the balance of the argument is in favour of making it as clear and sharp as possible so that the urgency of our position is quite apparent. The good effects of such a course have already made themselves felt. Cf. Andrew Shonfield, *British Economic Policy since the War*, revised ed. (Penguin, 1958), p. 269: 'Somehow, the bare threat of competition from Europe has provoked more interest among industrialists than the whole long series of British studies of American productivity from 1948 onwards. Thinking about the possible strength of a Continental sales drive in the British market has brought home, as nothing else before had done, the fact that much of industry is now under-equipped for the struggle.'

move the world. To help in the elaboration of a common Western European policy will be to harness them once again to a creative task, in which our particular brand of political wisdom might serve us and others well. And both these political and economic functions are part of a wider advantage: an intellectual and moral broadening of our national life which could restore to it some of the dynamism that seems to be lacking at the moment. The European association is not simply a plan for joining our future with that of France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg and other states as well. It is the only plan which exists for assuring us of a future at all. There is an urgent necessity for transcending national and linguistic frontiers which have become narrow and stifling, and Europe's movement towards unification provides a chance of achieving this. But it is the kind of chance that history offers only once.

Opposition to Great Britain's economic and political integration into Western Europe is usually carried on in the name of the two groupings which I have already discussed: in the name of N.A.T.O. (but really of Britain's 'special position' with America) or of the Commonwealth. But, as I have tried to show, neither of these associations can provide a permanent basis for a long-term British policy, nor, in so far as their advantages are real and not merely founded on self-deception, would they be harmed by Britain's recognition that its future lies in the strengthening of ties with Europe. As far as N.A.T.O. is concerned, the case hardly needs to be argued. Washington is not interested in Britain's claims to be the 'third power' in the world or to have a 'special position' within the alliance. What it wants is a stronger alliance, and that strength must come from expansion within and unity between members of the pact. Indeed, without some such integration it seems very doubtful whether N.A.T.O. will not fall into a state of decay and obsolescence, and for those who favour the North Atlantic Treaty to oppose Britain's entry into the Common Market can be regarded only as a failure of intelligence. Indeed, now that negotiations are under way, their breakdown would probably lead to a British withdrawal from European commitments of any kind. It seems a gratuitous piece of insanity for anyone who believes in a policy of Western collective security to try to bring this result about. An isolated and ageing Britain cannot be a good ally for anyone. The Communist Party realizes this fact, which is why they are so totally opposed to participation in Europe.

Similarly the Commonwealth will benefit from a restoration of Britain's dynamism. We must face the fact that Commonwealth countries are not so much interested in our leadership or guidance as right-wing Tories or left-wing Socialists would have us believe. What they are concerned with is money in the form of gifts or loans or advantageous trading conditions. A Britain perpetually tottering on the verge of bankruptcy is of no use to them: for most of them the spectacle merely adds decrepitude to the original sin of imperialism. We must be able to pay our own way before we can point out roads to anyone else, even supposing that we can find an audience desiring to be directed. At present our gestures of international co-operation, whether made towards N.A.T.O. or the Commonwealth, are likely to take on something of the ambiguity of Groucho Marx ordering roses for a lady ('And put "Clara I love you" on the bill!'). By entering the Common Market we may make ourselves solvent and will certainly not dissolve the Commonwealth to any greater extent than time and divergent interests are dissolving it already.

These criticisms of the European connection made in the name of the Commonwealth or of our position as America's senior N.A.T.O. ally have mostly come from the right wing of the Conservative and Labour parties, although the Labour left has recently acquired an admiration for the Commonwealth—at any rate as an argument against entry into Europe. And it is not very astonishing that some old-fashioned Tories should cling to the illusion of a sovereignty—even of a supremacy—which disappeared from the moment when we became unable to defend ourselves. It is, however, more surprising to find respectably moderate Labour men advocating policies which seem to show that they totally fail to appreciate how scanty are the resources of which Britain disposes in the field of international affairs. I suspect that at the back of their minds is a picture of the world as it existed in about 1948 when Ernest Bevin was the principle European architect of acceptance of the Marshall Plan and the construction of N.A.T.O., when Germany was still occupied and France was in political and economic chaos. Since then things have changed: France and Germany are now far more powerful, and post-war British preponderance in Europe can be seen to have been the result of an historical accident, which reduced them to an international position below that to which they would be normally entitled. Men like Denis Healy and Douglas Jay have based their

opposition to the Common Market on a view of Britain's potential influence which is every bit as illusory as that held by any Suez grouper.¹

An entirely different line of reasoning is followed by those who object to Western European unity on the grounds that it is a weapon in the cold war directed at the Soviet Union and only secondarily concerned with the interests of the member countries and of their populations. There is a certain amount of truth in this view, which is widely held on the left wing of the Labour Party and fed by a general dislike of Dr. Adenauer and President de Gaulle. Obviously, any progress towards closer ties between the countries of Western Europe will strengthen N.A.T.O. in the immediate future (indeed, that is one of its advantages). Since Western Europe at present wishes to resist Soviet tendencies to expansion, a greater degree of co-operation among its states will enable them to resist more effectively. But there is also a sense in which 'neutralists' should regard European unity as a challenge, something which they should welcome as an opportunity rather than turn from in priggish disgust. At present the majority of Western Europeans take a rather more prudent view of Russia and its leaders than is taken, say, by *Tribune* or *France-Observateur*, but if the editors of these papers wish to persuade them to look at the matter from a different angle it is open to them to do so, and they may very well be assisted by an evolution within the U.S.S.R. which, within twenty years or so, will make partisans of a 'third force' out of us all. The attitude taken up by left-wing Socialists about Europe implies singularly little confidence in their ability to influence Europeans. Their reasoning appears to run as follows: 'A united Western Europe will be more powerful than a divided Western Europe, but, since we have no chance of directing it, it is better that it should remain divided and, therefore, weak.' It is true that the experience of these gentlemen in trying to persuade their own countrymen has not been sufficiently encouraging to allow them to believe that they would succeed any better with foreigners.²

¹ I should add that another objection put forward from this source is that the existence of the European Community will make plans for disengagement in central Europe unworkable. But the Community already exists. We cannot dissolve it even if we wanted to, and this type of argument is therefore irrelevant.

² There is also the fear that Britain's joining the Common Market will prevent the introduction of Socialist measures at home. To this one can only reply that, as a trading nation, we are already not entirely at liberty to do as we like with our industry and that the Community is potentially a more powerful instrument for planning an economy than we ourselves have developed even under the Labour

THE U.N.

In this discussion of the international groupings with which Great Britain is involved there might seem to be one considerable omission. There has been no discussion of the part which the United Nations might have to play as a permanent basis for British policy, and there are, of course, very many people who regard what is called 'world government' as a solution for our and, indeed, everyone else's problems. The omission, however, was deliberate. At present the U.N. is not an association of like-minded states determined to strengthen the ties between them. It is an international assembly whose main purpose is to arbitrate between countries engaged in a struggle for power and to restrict the consequences of their mutual enmities. For that reason, while the U.N.O. should be supported in its task by all those who desire to avert war, it does not provide a suitable basis for that participation in some larger unit which Britain must seek, and it also seems very unlikely that world government will come about by means of it. It is of immense use in softening the sharp edges of the cold war, but that exacting role in itself is liable to prevent any tightening of ties or development of its structure. In fact, if Communist China enters the Security Council, as reason and justice would seem to demand, the difficulty of getting anything done in the U.N. will be increased at the same time as its efficacy as a shock-absorber.¹ Until power politics between nations have come to an end the U.N.O. will remain an instrument of arbitration rather than of co-operation, and it will have its work cut out to remain even that. It deserves all the support we can give it, but it cannot be a substitute for the advantages to be gained from other, more limited, associations of states.

The result of an examination of Great Britain's present foreign-policy associations leads me to suppose, therefore, that only one of them

Government. In any case, 'Socialism in one Country', while appropriate on the lips of Stalin, is hardly a slogan for democratic politicians operating in a small, over-populated island.

¹ There are, of course, also the U.N. specialized agencies, but everything that I hear of them disinclines me to the belief that they are a sound basis for technical co-operation between nations. Cf. Andrew Shonfield's remarks about them and such projects as the Special U.N. Emergency Fund for Economic Development in *The Attack on World Poverty* (Chatto and Windus, 1960), especially chapters 7, 12, 13 and 14.

—the European association—can provide the conditions needed to absorb our national life into a new environment where it will prosper. Of the others, N.A.T.O. is essentially an emergency alliance and the Commonwealth a rapidly diminishing asset, whose continued usefulness is real but ought not to be overestimated. Once firmly settled in Europe, however, we can and ought to ask ourselves in what directions our influence within that association, as well as in the world outside it, should be exercised. Obviously, it is impossible to discuss here every detailed application of foreign policy in a future which may lie as much as twenty or thirty years ahead. But I propose to take two subjects—out of many—relations with the Soviet Union (or the cold war) and relations with India—the first because it is much the most important field of diplomacy today and the second because it illustrates neatly the need for reform in some of our diplomatic methods and our consequent neglect of some important advantages which are available to us. And these two themes are between them representative of British policy in that the one incites reflections on N.A.T.O. and the other raises the issue of what the future of Commonwealth relations is to be.

THE COLD WAR

What is called the 'cold war' is a world struggle for supremacy which has existed since 1945. In Europe the antagonists are, on the one side, the Soviet Union and its allies or satellites in Eastern Europe and, on the other, the U.S.A. and its associates in the N.A.T.O. pact. In Europe, at any rate, this struggle has been defensive on the part of the Western powers, whose forming of themselves into a military alliance was occasioned by their fear of a Russian attack. Outside Europe the issue has been complicated by a process of 'decolonization' and by the emergence of China as a power with a rather extreme viewpoint of its own. One result of this contrast is that while N.A.T.O. has been quite successful in containing Soviet political or military expansion in Europe, the Western bloc has been hampered by internal contradictions and external obstacles in its attempts to do the same elsewhere. Moreover, with some exceptions that bloc has accepted American leadership based on preponderant American economic and military power, and this has especially been the case in Europe. Now, however, a new factor is beginning to count: the development of a specifically European point of view following on

Europe's increasing prosperity and self-confidence—a development which has been symbolized most noticeably by France's demand for its own nuclear striking force. President de Gaulle would not be an awkward problem for American diplomacy if, on this issue, he did not represent a resurgent Europe.

What effect is this likely to have upon N.A.T.O.?

I have already stated that I believe in the necessity of N.A.T.O. until another defensive combination is put in its place so that I hope that I shall not be misunderstood if I suggest that over the next twenty years an increasingly united and increasingly strong Europe will evolve towards some form of neutralism—always supposing that something recognizable as the cold war still exists—and that in my opinion this is something which British policy should not necessarily resist, an aim of which it might be said, as Chanzy said of the *revanche*, 'he who forgets it should be hanged, but he who speaks of it before its time should be shot with the full honours of his rank'. Two developments in international affairs make me think that this is the most probable way for things to go.

The first of these developments is a strategic one. America is now directly threatened by Russian rockets, and, though for the moment it has shown no sign of weakening in the game of 'kill me and I'll shoot you dead', it is obvious that the present situation is bound to make American governments more reluctant to go to war over European issues. It is significant that it is America, for the first time since the war, who is trying to induce its European allies to negotiate with the Soviet Union. When there is the American equivalent of C.N.D. putting pressure on the Democratic Party we shall all have something to worry about, and, though that day will probably be far off, it would be as well if, before it comes, Europe were prepared to meet it. A powerful neutral Western Europe armed with its own nuclear weapons for use in case of attack would be in such a position, and this is all the more true in that Soviet policy is likely to have changed (and perhaps softened) considerably by that date.

This change of Russian policy is the second international development favouring a neutralization of Western Europe. Of course, if Russia were to behave brutally at home and aggressively abroad, then, no doubt, both America and Europe would feel that they must hang together or hang separately, and it is true that nobody can tell how Russia is going to behave. What we feel at the moment is an evolution within the

Soviet Union, of which we perceive isolated incidents like the peaks of an iceberg above the surface of the sea, an evolution which, however many *peripeteia* it may include, is unlikely to work out to the advantage of Soviet Communism as we know it at present. In fact, there are already signs that some quarters in the U.S.S.R.—I should put it no higher than that—desire to damp down international fires rather than to add fuel to them. From the moment that spirit predominates it should be easier for a neutral Western Europe to deal directly with Moscow, provided that it is not at its mercy. If they had to negotiate about such matters as the German problem on their own account it is probable that America's European allies would be more realistic, since they would not have to fear losing support from Washington, and the Soviet Union more forthcoming since it would have some interest in maintaining the neutrality of Western Europe. This kind of negotiation is the only one which could conceivably solve the problem of central Europe.

I repeat, three conditions are essential if a neutralization of Western Europe is to be possible: (1) An evolution in Russian policy involving the practical abandonment of the threat implied by messianic Communism. (2) The existence of a Western Europe united politically and prosperous economically. (3) The possession by such a Western Europe of sufficient nuclear means of retaliation to deter attack. The folly of British neutralism lies in the belief not only that the operation can be carried out in the present state of Russia but that Britain could be neutral alone or in alliance with Yugoslavia, Egypt and India. The fact is that an integrated Western Europe is the only power grouping which could conceivably form a 'third force'. Any other combination would be liable to be crushed economically and possibly militarily. Nor would any other combination do anything to slacken international tension. Britain's abandonment of the N.A.T.O. alliance would simply make war more probable. Western Europe's recognition that it no longer needed it for its own protection might make a European settlement possible. Such a step would not necessarily imply a worsening of relations with the U.S.A. America is now in the position of having to estimate just how far it is prepared to go in support of its European allies, and the dilemma is a painful one, from which the U.S. government will become increasingly glad to be extricated. No doubt formal dissociation from Europe would also make the American position easier in Africa and Asia. Western Europe would continue to place emphasis on the word

'Western'—its neutralism would be positive but in a reverse direction from that to which the phrase usually refers.

Naturally, the ideas I have put forward here come into the realm of conjecture rather than that of immediate practicable politics. Many things might happen to invalidate them, and they are, in any case, only intended to be of long-term significance.¹ The strengthening and unifying of Western Europe is certainly bound to lead to the assertion of a specifically European point of view necessarily different from that held by the U.S.A. Add to this a potentially wider divergence between Europe and America caused by strategic realities and a possible blunting of the Russian political and military menace, and the result must be some decisive change in present international groupings. It would be as well if Great Britain, with all the machinery which its political system provides for carrying on a continuous and unimpeded foreign policy, were to welcome that change from what is at the moment a highly uncomfortable position and to try to work towards it with the object of making the transition from one system to another as devoid of risk as possible. The world picture which we have known since 1945 is quite clearly breaking up around us. We now have to decide not so much what we want to see in its place as the speed at which we think it convenient and advantageous that the new conjuncture should arrive.

BRITAIN AND INDIA

I have chosen to speak about our relations with India because of their exemplary significance. They form a type of what our relations with Commonwealth countries, Afro-Asian countries and the 'uncommitted countries' may be. They contain most of the suspicions and all the real obstacles that bedevil our dealings with the 'third' world as well as

¹ Of course, if President Kennedy's imaginative policy of 'interdependence' were ever turned into reality, then we might see a united Western Europe enter into an increasingly close relationship with America. But it has yet to be seen whether the U.S.A. can adapt its policies to association with Europe on a basis of equality. By encouraging European integration President Kennedy has taken a long-term risk in order to avoid a more immediately certain decline in the Atlantic alliance. To surmount that risk will demand from American policy wisdom and skill over a long period of time. On the other hand, the risk may not turn out to be very great: in certain circumstances an American government might welcome an opportunity to 'disengage' in Europe provided that the neutralized terrain did not fall into the hands of Russia.

the advantages and prejudices in our favour from which we might profit.

Of course, nothing is likely to make much difference to relations between Britain and India on the purely political plane. India is bound to continue its path of neutralism and anti-colonialism, and its statesmen during and after the reign of Mr. Nehru (always supposing that the country remains united, which is by no means certain) will suspect British motives and strike irritatingly moral attitudes about them. For our part, we shall find the Indians unfair and hypocritical and will relieve our feelings by complaining about their failure to practise what they preach in Kashmir and Assam. India will not move nearer the West unless it is driven there by Chinese aggression, and the West will be equally doubtful of what it considers as Indian 'double standards' when applied to such matters as nuclear testing or the relative wickedness of Suez and Hungary.

This is the way political relations look on the surface, but there is more to it than that. Since the war Indian feelings have been considered by British governments more, perhaps, than those of any other country. There has been co-operation between the two governments over specific political problems—Indo-China or Korea—and between their officials over a mass of detail. The very irritation which forms so constant a theme of diplomatic exchanges between New Delhi and London would hardly exist if ties between the two capitals were not felt to be close. Indian Pecksniffery irritates us when the superior airs of the Chinese leave us untouched, while the glimpses India has had since the war of unregenerate British imperialism have seemed far more shocking than similar apparitions from the direction of Paris. The British and the Indians do seem to measure each other by higher standards than they apply to other countries, and this, while it can be annoying, also offers more of a basis for friendly relations than more transitory political connections. These latter, indeed, are likely to dissolve, as Britain and India drift slowly apart, each absorbed in its local political situation. As the British 'presence' in South-East Asia diminishes, Indian support will be of less value, and our increasing preoccupation with Europe will make us allow less weight to advice from New Delhi. The position of India as 'most-favoured nation' in British foreign policy is essentially a transitory one.

Yet it would be a tragedy if Britain and India were to lose contact

on other planes than that of politics. There are too many things that we have in common, and, in the first place, a common language.

‘The truth of the matter is that the British not only ruled India for a long time but they also took partial possession of the Indian mind. . . . The capacity of the Indian attachment to English culture and political institutions to withstand the innumerable affronts which India suffered at British hands is a major fact of world history.’¹

To read a small English-language review published in India is a very moving experience when one thinks of the effort that has gone into its production and of the hope it represents of establishing links across frontiers which are sometimes far more difficult to pass than mere barbed wire and concrete posts. The English language can be a means of liberation for an Indian intellectual, isolated as he often is by an Indian tongue which denies him a wide audience or access to world culture, and, despite all the difficulties, India is now producing a number of good writers in English, some of whom are making a considerable contribution to our common imaginative stock. It is this kind of link that will do more for understanding between Britain and India than Commonwealth conferences or even than Colombo plans, though it is our plain duty as well as our plain interest to help India overcome its poverty and ignorance as far as we can.

These cultural ties, however, are neglected by British diplomacy and even by informed British opinion. During a recent royal tour of India I am told that many educated Indians expressed disappointment at the lack of references in the Queen’s speeches to the fact that Britain and India share a common language and, hence, to some extent a common culture. Now obviously not everything can be mentioned in royal speeches, but one would have thought that those officials who advised on their composition might have realized that here was one of the strongest bonds linking Indian intellectuals to this country. And this is only a symptom which, it is true, is significant of the neglect that has overtaken the study of Indian affairs since the end of the British raj. Africa we have always with us, a constant theme for politicians interested

¹ Edward Shils, *The Intellectual Between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation* (The Hague, 1961), p. 79. This essay should be read by anyone who wants to know what real, indissoluble bonds exist between Britain and India.

in denouncing the government or intellectuals seeking a vicarious satisfaction for their guilt complexes. A spate of good, bad and indifferent books on Africa pours from journalists, politicians and scholars, but where can we read brilliant studies of Indian politics or history? How many students are busy learning Indian languages? Who are the experts on Burma and Pakistan? We have left these countries; the glamour of their national struggles is over, and we hardly take the trouble to understand them. Yet India is a sub-continent, not just Mr. Nehru making a speech directed to the outside world, but all the possibilities after Mr. Nehru, the potential upheavals and losses. Yet at the moment we seem to find India less exciting than Africa—probably because we feel that we can still affect the issues in the latter continent. India is less dramatic. There is no villain of the piece, no Verwoerd or Welensky lurking in the shadows to be denounced from the pulpit or in Trafalgar Square. There are simply intractable political and economic problems to be studied and, if possible, solved. There is simply the fact that on India depends the future of democracy in Asia and Africa. If India cannot remain a democracy nobody else can, and to do so it needs our help both physically and psychologically. Yet the present indifference gives the impression that on the day when India ceased to be an issue in British domestic politics our interest in it vanished.¹

As I have already pointed out, our political ties with India are bound to weaken as time goes on, but this does not mean that we should allow other forms of contact to lapse as well. Unfortunately, India is one instance of a more general phenomenon: the fact that we are not good at propagating our culture or even at taking account of it in terms of foreign policy. I have no wish to belittle the British Council; it is often served with intelligence and devotion. But if its resources, both in money and personnel, are compared with those of the cultural relations department of the Quai d'Orsay it is evident that it lags far behind.² Among those who direct our foreign policy there seems to be little understanding

¹ A similar lack of interest seems to prevail with regard to Latin America. One can go into a library and hardly find a book about that vast area of the world. Admittedly, this situation may not last: events there may soon provide too good an opportunity of bemoaning American errors to be neglected. Now at least we know all (and rather more than all) that is to be known about Fidel Castro's Cuba. Still, it is not a bad idea to be informed in advance of events.

² Cf. the remarks of Sir William Hayter in *The Diplomacy of the Great Powers* (Hamish Hamilton, 1960) on the use made by French diplomacy of its cultural advantages (pp. 39-40).

that in Africa and Asia our relations with states will be conducted through schools and institutes every bit as much as through chanceries and consulates. We are coming round to the idea that economic aid is an integral part of diplomatic action, but it has not yet been understood that our language and our culture are also more important than gunboats in the new pattern of international affairs which is declaring itself for states of our dimensions.¹

NEW INSTRUMENTS OF POLICY

This gap in understanding is one instance of a more general failure to adapt the instruments of British foreign policy to the conditions not so much of the cold war as of a new era in diplomacy. We fight shy of the word 'propaganda', but many of the moves in the contemporary game of international affairs inevitably fall under that heading. International sounding-boards such as the U.N., the influence exerted by the 'uncommitted' countries, the necessity of convincing public opinion at home before taking action abroad—all these features of the world as the modern diplomat must cope with it mean that those who conduct a foreign policy must pay increasing attention not only to things as they are but also to things as they seem to other people. This distinction has not always been clearly present in the minds of British politicians and diplomats, and for want of a clear realization of it, due perhaps to insufficient cynicism on the part of those concerned, we are liable to blunder.² For example, a failure to observe that the disarmament talks at Geneva were largely an exercise in propaganda created a situation where the Soviet Union could take trick after trick (and here the State Department was even less flexible than the Foreign Office). Yet we are not

¹ In 1958 I was in Morocco, which had then been an independent state for about three years and where there was at that time a considerable demand for English culture and no barrier in the shape of past colonial history. Yet there was no English library in Rabat, and some more time went past before one was established. And Rabat is only one of several Moroccan towns. No doubt this failure was due to lack of funds, but, after all, it had been apparent for quite a time that Morocco would shortly join the ranks of the new states. Any proper planning of the use of culture as an instrument of foreign policy ought to have insured that the funds were ready when they were wanted.

² The Congo is an area where a little more determined cynicism could have saved us a great deal of trouble. As it was, the British government's policy was indecisive and shifty and therefore appeared more nefarious than it was. In fact it was hardly nefarious at all.

incapable of being clever: the defeat of the Communist guerrillas in Malaya by means of a viable plan for Malayan independence backed by unrelenting political and military warfare was almost the only successful repulse of a movement of this nature since the war, as well as by far the greatest success the West has won in South-East Asia.¹ In Malaya we were in a war situation, but the same mixture of diplomacy and propaganda could easily be employed on other occasions. An essential factor is unified control. Quite obviously such institutions as the British Council and the foreign broadcasting services of the B.B.C. should be under the direct influence of the Foreign Office to a far greater extent than is at present the case, and the arguments in favour of this change would be irresistible were there any confidence in the Foreign Office's ability to make use of the new resources which would be placed at its disposal.² What is wanted is the apparatus of a directorate of political warfare placed in the hands of those who can use it, and whose position of authority is such that they can insure that those aspects of foreign policy which concern them are not neglected by more traditionally minded diplomats. Our foreign service is certainly not stupider than that of our opponents, but at the moment they are playing three-dimensional chess while we are restricted to a single board.

THE DANGER

This discussion of the way in which British foreign policy can adapt itself to changed and reduced circumstances has necessarily been partial, omitting many points that should have been raised in any full treatment of the subject. Such a treatment, however, would require a volume to

¹ The other case is the defeat of the Hukbalahap movement in the Philippines. It is interesting to reflect that if critics of Sir Gerald Templer's stern measures had been heeded Malaya might still be in a state of emergency today and its peaceful accession to independence would have been rendered impossible. Stern measures can bring results—when they are applied against the right people and combined with a reasonable political approach. It is for want of the latter that American policy in Laos has been a fiasco and that things do not promise to go much better in South Viet-Nam.

² The argument usually brought against such an arrangement is that the 'independence' of the British Council and the B.B.C. would be prejudiced, but, since I have never met a foreigner who did not think that these institutions were controlled by the Foreign Office, I regard this argument with some scepticism. The fact is, of course, that at times of crisis the B.B.C.'s external broadcasts are not independent in any sense of the word, nor should they be.

itself, and my intention here has been simply to provide a sketch which might serve as a basis for more detailed thinking over the problem of adaptation that faces us. What I am concerned to emphasize is the importance of our recognizing the existence of such a problem. I have no doubt at all of the danger which threatens a country that has once been a first-class power and now is so no longer. There is a temptation to persist in the old ways, to persist in them just because they are the old ways, which once brought success and excitement and which may bring them again—for who knows how history will behave if it is wooed by our antique virtues? But it is not the repetition of gestures which were once magical that can save us from the creeping paralysis which afflicts empires in their decline. The remedy is activity, and the most and best we can do is to find some new purpose which may serve to satisfy the saving itch for achievement that all nations have within them. And I believe it to be the task of constructing Europe which can appease us rather than the frustration of continuing old struggles or of putting our hands to sand-castles which can never be completed now. We are a country that has known greatness and will never get the smell of it out of our nostrils until it is replaced by the bitterness of death. In 1848 Matthew Arnold wrote: 'I am not sure but I agree in Lamartine's prophecy that 100 years hence the Continent will be a great united Federal Republic, and England, all her colonies gone, in dull steady decay.'¹

We are very much in that position now, and if I have seemed repetitious in my insistence on the necessity of new policies and new associations it is because I have no wish to see our moment of ultimate lethargy, the twitching of wasted limbs and blinking of myopic eyes that marks the patient's lapse into a final coma.

¹ *The Letters of Matthew Arnold*, collected and arranged by George W. E. Russell (Macmillan, 1895), Vol. 1, p. 9.

WELFARE AND DISCONTENT

A platter and can for ivery man
What more can the quality want?
When you'se biting youse sup
What's cocking youse up,
Says Matthew Hannagan's aunt.

DUBLIN STREET BALLAD

In the last two chapters we have looked at Britain's relations with the world outside itself, and we have seen that this country's loss of power in the world since 1945 has set up frustrations in the English intellectual which he finds difficult to analyse, and which, therefore, he is tempted to attribute to other causes than the real one (at home, minor irritations; abroad, foreign countries, and in particular America). Now it is time to show that another revolutionary event in post-war English history—the creation of the Welfare State—has had a rather similar effect, though one more likely to be felt by intellectuals than by the mass of the population and, for that reason, less far-reaching in its possible consequences. I believe, however, that there is present the same mechanism of frustration and evasion which prevents the problem from ever being faced by those whom it most concerns.

The British Welfare State was to a great extent conceived by intellectuals. One might say without too much oversimplification that the Webbs thought of it, Keynes made it possible and the Labour Government of 1945 put it into action. In fact it had already begun to be put into action by the pre-1914 Liberal Government, and every successive administration added to it. Whatever their real feelings on the matter, politicians, even when they were of the right, could not afford to neglect the preferences of a mass electorate, unless economic crisis provided an

occasion for retrenchment, and from the Lloyd George budget onwards the Welfare State grew steadily in scope. What was new after 1945 was the policy of full employment made possible by a better understanding of economic forces and by a new moral determination not to allow a repetition of the horrors of the depression. All this was the result of a radical and humanitarian idealism that had its roots deep in the nineteenth century, a stage in the struggle to rescue the working classes from the degradation to which the Industrial Revolution had reduced them. As such, it often represented an intention of cultivating one's own garden, if necessary at the expense of the wide stretches of territory acquired by British power overseas, though a Joseph Chamberlain could apply an ordering principle both to British colonies and to Birmingham city government, believing, indeed, that the prosperity of the latter depended upon the possession of the former. 'What do they know of England who only England know?' asked Kipling, and Chesterton replied, 'Quite a bit.' The echoes of that debate have remained with us. Every time that a cut in the defence estimates is suggested as a means of expanding the social services it is revived, and the clash between Mr. Gaitskell and Aneurin Bevan over the shilling charge for prescriptions under the National Health Service is an instance of the political consequences it can have. Recently, however, the question has been posed in another form. Aid to underdeveloped countries has a more alluring ring for the liberal than the planting of the Union Jack on unoccupied portions of the globe, and there are signs that the left is changing its allegiance. Now it is on the progressive side that an excessive rise in our own standard of living without thought for our responsibilities overseas is deplored. The white man's burden has changed camps, but will still have to be borne by the same shoulders. For the moment, defence provides a convenient scapegoat, but it is not inconceivable that one day the idealist will find himself forced to choose between more benefits for the British workman and help for what have been well described as the 'proletarian nations'. The dilemma is not one that is easily soluble in a democracy, though I should imagine that it might be avoided by some slogan of the 'trade, not aid' variety. Its possible existence is an economic consequence of those ambivalent feelings which we have already observed in liberal intellectuals concerning the restriction of our possibilities of action in Africa and elsewhere.

INTELLECTUALS AND THE WELFARE STATE

However this reversal of the priorities in favour among liberal intellectuals may modify their opinion of the Welfare State, there is no doubt that since 1945 most of them have, quite rightly, approved of it. It is true that just as there were some prepared to express direct disapproval of the decline (or, as they might have put it, the abandonment) of British power, so there have been voices raised in lamentation for an Edwardian civilization of country houses, which was all the more mythical in that its devotees failed to take into account any of the significant intellectual movements of the historical Edwardian age. On one level of satire there is Evelyn Waugh coldly detesting the vulgarities of a time which produces young officers with ill-fitting uniforms and slight northern accents; on another there is Peter Simple with his welfare court of King Len and Queen Doris; and on yet another (but this cannot be dignified by the name of satire at all) there is the romantic novelist Dornford Yates writing a book called *Lower Than Vermin* about open-cast mining in the much-cherished grounds of a great house. And these various intensities of attack represent accurately enough the gossiping and grumbling of an upper and upper-middle class which saw its privileges vanishing and concluded that it was being unfairly treated. In fact the English Welfare State has not had made against it the kind of philosophical or sociological point that is fairly common in, say, Sweden. The most powerful and respectable case against it (or against some of its external manifestations) has been made by a poet, John Betjeman, both in his prose writings and in his verse, and it is significant that his collected volume of poems has sold more than any other book of verse for many a long year.¹ His is the protest of a poet against the incumbrances of a mass society and against the inhumanity which can arise when even the most beneficent bureaucracy takes to social planning.

¹ More than that of any poet since Kipling. The comparison is not without interest. Whereas Kipling's chauvinism and biblical imagery provided for his mass middle-class audience an assurance of safety and divine approval, Mr. Betjeman has hit off a mood of nostalgia and wistful regret which for the moment is equally welcome. If there is safety in his world it is the menaced safety of old familiar things—ultimately of things remembered in childhood. That this longing for the simplicity of irremovable landmarks should be popular in England at the present time is understandable enough, but nostalgia is a dangerous and sterile emotion when over-indulged in other than purely artistic terms.

'I have a vision of The Future, chum,
The workers' flats in fields of soya beans
Tower up like silver pencils, score on score:
And Surging Millions hear the Challenge come
From microphones in communal canteens
"No Right! No Wrong! All's perfect, evermore."'¹

As a protest it is all the more effective because it is made in the name of a common humanity rather than of any imaginary élite, and behind it is the force of Mr. Betjeman's very considerable poetic talent. Nor is *The Planster's Vision* quite 1984. One of the major blots on English life since 1945 has been the way in which ministries and local authorities all too often have shown a ruthless disregard for the old buildings and unspoiled landscapes, which they should have regarded as national assets to be conserved whenever possible. New planning has often appeared as old ribbon development writ large (this was true even under the Labour Government). The desire of an official to round off some project to his own satisfaction has been shown to be just as powerful a motive of ruination as the urge to make money on the part of speculative builders, and discredit has been cast on the idea of planning and on those who carry it out—the more easily in that resistance to planning orders is now the main area of conflict between the state and the individual, and it has become obvious that the smaller the individual in question the less likely he is to emerge from the struggle with his rights. The word 'planner' has come to carry a slightly pejorative sense, which it hardly deserves, since it should have been apparent from the start that there were good and bad planners as well as good and bad plans.

What made matters worse immediately after 1945 was the strain on resources imposed by the need to rebuild bombed towns, construct new estates of houses, new schools and new factories—all as quickly as possible. This was an effort that left no time and no money for frills. But by 'frills', unfortunately, was meant almost anything of an aesthetic nature. How to take into consideration the merits of a nice piece of countryside when people were crying out for houses? How to build a national theatre when new power stations were wanted to end power cuts? In a fuel shortage why resist open-cast mining even if it did make a mess? It is hard to blame officials struggling to complete urgent tasks in a maze of

¹ *Collected Poems* (John Murray, 1958), p. 120.

conflicting priorities if they failed to make the extra effort necessary to provide decent modern architecture or save a picturesque corner of a town. The British government and local authorities had never greatly concerned themselves with cultural values, and they saw no reason to start at a moment when more pressing material problems claimed their attention. Even purely practical amenities were neglected. So obvious an evil as the smoke which made the air of many English cities a filthy mixture of soot and sulphur was not tackled until ten years after the end of the war and, despite the Clean Air Act, is still a major nuisance.¹ And if in a Welfare State nothing was done about a threat to health on a scale which might be thought to give rise to serious doubt whether towns like Manchester were fit places for the rearing of children, then more intangible considerations were bound to be left out of account.

Whether this was altogether a wise attitude on the part of the authorities is another matter. The system of priorities adopted by the Labour Government in 1945 was, no doubt, just and necessary, but when added to the effects of living on a small economic margin it did produce a rather grey and depressing atmosphere which was, to say the least of it, bad public relations. Perhaps there should have been more festivals of Britain. There should certainly have been a good deal more fresh paint. Part of the garish boom of the late fifties can be explained by a perfectly legitimate public reaction against the monotonous years of war and austerity. It would have paid the Labour Government to use a little low cunning and to prevent these dingy labels from being attached to their administration by their political opponents.

CULTURAL FAILURE

And this criticism of the attitude of officialdom towards 'amenities' leads on to a more general field of activities, where the English Welfare State has been felt to be defective even by those who were most in favour of it. In the thirties it had been confidently expected that removal of the economic pressures afflicting the English working classes would lead to a considerable cultural flowering. At their most optimistic intellectuals could foresee the appearance of 'artists, writers, actors, musicians, cinema-men

¹ Even then it is doubtful whether anything would have been done if the great London smog of December 1952 had not given a shock to public opinion. It lasted for four days and was responsible, it is estimated, for about 4,000 deaths.

to enrich the new-won leisure of the victorious people. . . .¹ 'Under Socialism not only would the aggregate wealth of the community increase, but the proportion spent on cultural activity would rise sharply. . . .'² The contemporary vision of the aesthetic ideal was expressed in its most respectable and moderate form by Stephen Spender. The artist must fight for social progress 'because a new age of creative activity can only exist in an environment of peace and social justice; because art must spring, not from the sensibility of a few segregated individuals, but from roots which reach towards the lives of the whole people; because his final goal is an unpolitical age, in which great works of art may be produced'.³

These were sentiments which would have commanded widespread agreement among intellectuals in the thirties, some, indeed, carrying their hopes further still and expecting a mass participation of an emancipated working class in the future work of cultural creation. Memories of William Morris were combined with the collecting of industrial folk-songs to produce expectations of factory workers attending performances of Shakespeare and agricultural labourers pausing in their harvesting to sing ballads. As prototypes of this proletarian culture there were the Welsh miners' choirs, and the serious self-improvement practised by a large number of working men. Before 1939 there seemed every reason to hope that provided the enervating curse of unemployment and poverty could be removed English culture would be enriched and aesthetic values brought into lives where they had hitherto appeared to be lacking.⁴

¹ Edgell Rickword, *The Mind in Chains*, ed. C. Day Lewis (Muller, 1937), p. 253.

² Alan Bush, *op. cit.*, p. 142. He continued: 'Municipal orchestras and opera houses would be established in every large town and would tour the smaller towns of their neighbourhood. Professional musicians, whether composers, teachers or performers, would suffer no insecurity, they would be protected against unemployment, illness and old age. . . . Talented young composers would be commissioned to write works, which would be subsequently performed and published. Established composers would be supported and given every encouragement.'

³ Stephen Spender, *Forward from Liberalism* (Gollancz, 1937), p. 37.

⁴ These hopes may have been chimerical, but they represent a more respectable view of the English working classes than that held by some writers today who appear to admire them just because they are brutal and uneducated. Clancy Segal's portrait of a mining village sins in this respect, and, while I have no doubt that Alan Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* is an accurate and honest portrait, some critical reaction to it showed signs of that vicarious enjoyment of the bloody by the bloodless, which had already been apparent in the unhealthy interest displayed by the literary world in the details of the life and death of the late Dylan Thomas.

After 1945 and the advent of the Welfare State the reality was a little different. What had not been realized by the intellectuals of the thirties was the fact that the means which had to be used to increase the material welfare of the working classes were inevitably destructive (or hastened the process of destruction) of the kind of residual folk culture on which their hopes were based, and which the peasant culture of a country such as Russia also suggested as a model. Such agreeable phenomena as Welsh choirs and self-instructed working men were based on cultural isolation and the lack of educational facilities. When the one was ended and the other provided, local cultural activity tended to dry up. This was, no doubt, a bad thing, but it is hard to see how it could have been avoided in as small and centralized a country as Britain. With television and wireless and patterns of education that are rapidly becoming standardized even the differences between England on the one hand and Scotland and Wales on the other are lessening, let alone those between the various parts of England itself. In modern industrial conditions the same well-kept suburbs and housing estates around every city are essential to secure badly needed mobility of labour. The monotony of suburbia is a precondition of economic efficiency, while universal education which must be centralized to some degree, if it is to run smoothly, is also hostile to strong cultural divergences as between parts of the same country. This trend towards uniformity is a universal one, which we must do our best to tolerate even if we do not like it. In this connection its importance is that it made irrelevant all cultural hopes based on a possible resurgence of 'popular' art, literature and music. To the extent to which the cultural theories held by the 'New Left' today repeat these expectations of the thirties they are founded on illusion.¹

Under the Welfare State not only have the vestiges of a specifically popular culture continued to disappear but they have not been replaced by anything which intellectuals felt inclined to welcome. Instead of holding discussion groups or organizing amateur theatricals the English working classes have been reading women's magazines and comics or watching television—and commercial television at that. What is worse,

¹ It is interesting to compare the experience of Ireland. There a national revolution was preceded by hopes of cultural development which were subsequently disappointed, and, despite the barrier afforded by a difference in religion and a lively nationalism, the industrial civilization of England is exerting stronger and stronger pressure on Irish life.

they have appeared positively to enjoy doing so. With the rise in their standard of living the working classes are, in fact, becoming middle class in their tastes and amusements. (This is a statement which is violently disputed by interested parties but I believe it to be true nevertheless. The middle-class characteristics will not, of course, be the same as those of people who were born into that state, any more than a *nouveau riche* millionaire will behave in the same way as an aristocrat, but the aspiration towards middle-class standards certainly exists.) And along with this process goes an unavoidable, if disagreeable, transition from the illiterate to the literate, which for a time produces the characteristic virtues of neither. Education takes several generations to work. In the meantime we have to sit tight and hope.

But the disappointment felt by intellectuals at seeing the working classes reproduce a large number of middle-class characteristics (from an obsession with motor-cars to a fascination with television) was not something that they could easily admit to themselves. As with their concealed dissatisfaction at some of the results of Britain's decline in power, their aesthetic distaste for an increasingly bourgeois society had to be analysed in terms of a scapegoat, and the more to the left they were by temperament (i.e. the more convinced devotees of a *Proletkult*) the more strongly this need was felt. From it stems the attack on the mass-media and their capitalist owners about which we have heard a great deal in recent months. Just as wars were once blamed on villainous armaments manufacturers, the 'merchants of death', and the problems connected with war thereby shirked, so now the apparent enjoyment with which the English masses receive the nonsense conveyed by film, television and newspaper can be put down to the account of skilful commercial corruption without any discussion of the real dilemmas of mass culture.

Naturally I should not wish to maintain that the controllers of the mass-media are completely innocent—or even mainly innocent. This complicated question will be discussed in a later chapter. But the point I wish to make here is that the debate on the corrupting effects of the mass-media is one consequence of a widespread dissatisfaction among intellectuals with the cultural results of the Welfare State. And it should be said at once that there are good grounds for such a feeling. Leaving aside the chimerical hopes of the thirties, government action in the cultural field has clearly been totally insufficient. With private patronage on the wane and likely to decrease still further under the present tax laws

(during the time I have written this book an excellent monthly, the *Twentieth Century*, has been reduced to a quarterly apparently owing to financial difficulties), state action has become necessary if some kinds of cultural activity are to continue at all. Covent Garden Opera-house would presumably have no chance whatever of making ends meet without a subsidy, and the national theatre would have to wait even longer to be built if the money had to be found from charity. But the Arts Council grant for the whole of England is less than the cultural budget of the city of Hamburg; the money made available for our national galleries and museums, though it has recently (only very recently) been increased, is still wildly insufficient, and an essential project such as the rebuilding of the British Museum library seems likely to be postponed until the plans for it are out of date.

Of course, there are limits to what the state can do as a patron. George Orwell once wrote that the best way of helping writers would be to give them a bed in a doss-house and a bowl of skilly twice a day and then to leave them alone. There are obvious disadvantages to present-day patronage of the individual artist by the state or by large cultural foundations. Such awards are made by committees composed of well-known and respectable figures who are likely to favour a type of art or literature to which their responses are already attuned. At the worst, we have the farce of a Sunday paper awarding a prize to some established man of letters who is hardly in need of it. At best the young writer chosen will be representative of a fairly familiar and fashionable *avant-garde*. Committees must play safe, and any occasion on which they do not do so can be taken only as a lucky exception, not as the rule. Generally they are a good deal less prone to make startlingly correct anticipations than the eccentric patron. How would Joyce have fared if he had produced *Ulysses* as a candidate for a book prize? For the moment I feel strongly that a writer or a painter would do better to trust to his publisher or dealer than to public or semi-public patronage.

On the other hand, in such aesthetic domains as architecture and town-planning only the state can take the initiative. Not even the wealthiest property developer would either wish or be able to plan an entire London street. The owners of land on the outskirts of large towns can hardly be expected to renounce the profits of speculative building of their own free will. Here it is the state that must act, and it is precisely in this, its proper sphere, that the state has shown its action inadequate. Our

towns with some exceptions (Coventry is the shining example) are badly planned, and some of them are even so ill-adapted to their purpose of providing urban living space as to be positively uninhabitable. One only has to live in a city like Manchester for a certain length of time to be made thoroughly aware of the damage done by smog and the garden city ideal—it is hard to say which is the worse, the one being the poison that kills and the other the delusive antidote that prevents the sufferer from realizing that he is dying. What happens now in Manchester is that anyone with any money clears off at night to the leafy suburban paradises—Wilmslow, Alderley Edge, Altrincham—leaving the centre of the city so dead in the evening that it is hardly possible to get a sandwich in a pub after a cinema. And this example has been followed so docilely by an unimaginative local authority that the urban sprawl is extended for miles, while acres around the centre of the town have the air of having been subjected to a heavy bombardment.

This sort of thing is the death of urbanism and may possibly be the result of the English never having regarded cities other than London as places to live in. But the story is the same when it comes to individual buildings. The London County Council have the powers to stop the Shell company from putting up inverted packing cases on the South Bank site. However, they have not chosen to exercise them in this or in numerous other instances, and the result is that opportunity after opportunity for the adornment of London has been missed.¹ This is comprehensible in the case of the City, whose rulers are notoriously more concerned with property values than with proportions, but is much less so in that of the Labour majority on the L.C.C. In fact, the arts are usually discussed only at council meetings in big cities, when some alderman imitates the hearty tomfoolery of a President of the Royal Academy in protesting against the acquisition of a modern painting by the municipal gallery, or when it is once again demonstrated that Britain is the only country in the world where contemporary sculpture cannot be placed on certain exposed sites because of the activities of vandals. All this is nothing to be proud of. Epstein on show in a fair is a national disgrace that has lasted too long. As for the trial of Lady Chatterley, our most

¹ In New York, on the other hand, the reverse seems to be the case. The city has no power to dictate an architectural policy to the companies, but they themselves appear to regard their prestige as being involved in the construction of exciting buildings to an extent that would seem extraordinary in London. Mr. Cotton's summoning of Dr. Gropius is still an exception.

sensational and most recent collective manifestation in the field of literature, it had all the characteristics of a public literary rout. I am not sure whether, from the point of view of someone who cares for literary values, it is not better for a book to be banned than escape the censor in clouds of confused rhetoric.¹ It is, of course, true that the English legal system is singularly unsuited to the conduct of an enquiry into any moral or philosophical problem and that confusion was therefore inevitable.

Quite a long list could be compiled of the ways in which the Welfare State has been a cultural failure. Everyone will tot up the items according to his own taste, but some at least demand inclusion in any tally. There is the continuing lack of a national theatre. There is the abolition of the Crown Film Unit. There is the failure to protect historic monuments, and the devastation of large tracts of countryside, often ruined at the behest of government departments, whose promises to repair the landscapes they spoil are so infrequently carried out. And, of course, excellent, even humanitarian, arguments are never lacking for each planned withdrawal on the cultural front. The service departments, we are told, must have firing ranges. Food production must take precedence over the preservation of mere curiosities such as prehistoric earthworks. The green belts around cities prevent the provision of homes (an emotive word that springs naturally to the lips of speculative builders). At a time when this country is facing the worst economic crisis since . . . should we, ought we, can we, afford to . . . ?²

¹ It seems to me quite evident that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is hostile to the institution of marriage, not because it takes a cynical or low view of sex, but because it takes far too high a one. If sexual intercourse is considered as a great mystical experience or nothing, then obviously most marriages are not worth keeping together. The logic of Lawrence's position is that, if that experience is not found in one relationship, then it is time to search for another, and this is, in fact, a familiar development of the romantic view of love. Now, while I do not think that there is anything terribly harmful in a literary statement of this view (nor, for that matter, that what the gamekeeper actually did to Lady Chatterley has much significance), it is certainly clouding the issue to say that the book is favourable to marriage. On the other hand, the fact that it is hostile to our present marital institutions is no reason to forbid it. If it were, the Koran should be banned. It is, of course, typical that what began as an argument about intellectual liberty should have ended as a discussion of erotic detail.

² One of the worst instances of official philistinism of recent years has been the attitude taken towards the London Library and other (legally) similar institutions by Westminster Borough Council and the Commissioners for Inland Revenue. One has to go back to Sir Kingsley Wood's attempt to tax books in 1939 to find as flagrantly barbarous arguments advanced in defence of an official action.

The answer is usually 'no'.

Some eighty years ago Matthew Arnold advocated increased action on the part of the state as a remedy for the cultural situation created by the rise of a Philistine middle class:

'On what action may we rely to replace, for some time at any rate, that action of the aristocracy upon the people of this country, which we have seen exercise an influence in many respects elevating and beneficial, but which is rapidly, and from inevitable causes, ceasing? . . . I confess I am disposed to answer: On the action of the State.'¹

And we in our turn may ask whether this vision has been fulfilled.

To this question too the answer would seem to be 'no'.

For if we take the very example Arnold employs in this essay, the example of education, it can be seen how far we fall short of the possibilities he envisaged, though fifteen years have passed since the introduction of the Welfare State. His picture of the problem posed for the middle classes by the necessity of educating their children has a contemporary ring about it, which shows how little has been done to solve it since then:

' . . . the middle classes in England have every reason not to rest content with their private schools; the State can do a great deal better for them. By giving to schools for these classes a public character, it can bring instruction in them under a criticism which the stock of knowledge and judgement in our middle classes is not of itself at present able to supply. By giving to them a national character, it can confer on them a greatness and a noble spirit, which the tone of these classes is not of itself at present adequate to impart. Such schools would soon provide notable competitors with the existing public schools; they would do these a great service by stimulating them, and making them look into their own weak points more closely. Economical, because with charges uniform and under severe revision, they would do a great service to that large body of persons who, at present, seeing that on the whole the best secondary instruction to be found is that

¹ 'Democracy', *Mixed Essays* (Smith and Elder, 1880), p. 23.

of the existing public schools, obtain it for their children from a sense of duty, although they can ill afford it, and although its cost is certainly exorbitant. Thus the middle classes might, by the aid of the State, better their instruction, while still keeping its cost moderate.¹

In 1963 the 'large body of persons' who send their children to public schools at the cost of considerable financial stringency because of what they believe to be the insufficiencies of the state system are still with us. Leaving aside all question of the 'snob-value' of going to a public school, it is difficult to assert that the talented boy or girl who enters the local state school have as good an education as the sons and daughters of wealthy parents who receive their schooling privately. And this is especially true of the not-so-brilliant child, the 'difficult' child and the late developer. For these the state system of hurdles to be jumped, with overcrowded classes as the only preparation for them, spells disaster. And the result is that, so far from the state schools having solved the problem of education for the middle classes (old and new), the increasing necessity of a good education for those who wish to get on in the world has led to the public schools being fuller than ever. Plainly, universal compulsory education sponsored and paid for by the state is failing to do what Arnold anticipated it would (i.e. provide an effective competitor for at least the minor public schools), and this failure has disagreeable social consequences, of which the most notorious is the creation of an all-too-accessible rule of thumb by which the station in life of any individual can be measured.²

It should be noted that the failure here comes into the domain of culture rather than that of welfare. If the children who go to state schools were less well equipped with classrooms and playing fields than those who go to public schools, if their school meals were inadequate or the school medical services inefficient, there would be an outcry (in fact,

¹ Ibid., pp. 34-5.

² 'What education is doing is to make the social hierarchy more clearly marked than ever; and to widen the gap between the people with the most and the least education to such an extent that communication is hardly possible between them. . . . We have, as a nation, to show that we can provide a first-rate education for the very few (something in which we still excel) without providing a second-rate education for the many.' Michael Young, *The Chipped White Cups of Dover* (London, 1960), p. 14.

there is constant pressure for the modernization of school buildings, and any scandal gets usually wide publicity). Yet the fact that these children should be less well taught gets practically no attention, or, rather, there is something of a conspiracy to pass it over in silence. In other words, there is an indifference on the part of the English public to educational values which is not paralleled on the continent and used not to be in Scotland (but I am told that the situation has deteriorated there too).

Education is only one, though possibly the most important, instance of the failure of the Welfare State where culture is concerned (it is also being affected by other difficulties for which the Welfare State in itself could not be expected to provide a solution, but these must be left aside for the moment), and it is of some interest to ask the reasons of that failure. Why should the steel town of Bochum in the Ruhr be prepared to build a very expensive new town theatre when one cannot imagine Sheffield doing anything of the kind? Why should town planning be a success in Scandinavia and not in England? Why should state systems of education work perfectly well elsewhere and not here?

Part of the answer (perhaps most of it) would seem to lie in some historical defects of the English character. In his brilliant essay *The Puritan Tradition in English Life*, which should be read by anyone interested in contemporary England, John Marlowe has summed the matter up:

'The Puritan conception of art as an optional extra is a conception with which comparatively few Englishmen would be inclined to quarrel, either in theory or in practice. In such matters of utility as town planning, house building and furniture designing there is a strong tendency to let the practical man do the essence of the thing and then, if at all, to get an artist to come along and add the frills. The proper domain of art, it is felt, is in the non-essential things, in the pleasant knick-knacks of life, in the poetry, in the jewellery, in the music, which a man can take or leave, which he does not have to live with, which are part of life's relaxations and not part of its serious business. . . . The artist is regarded partly as a public entertainer, like an actor or professional footballer, and partly as an ancillary professional man, like a chiropodist or a beauty specialist.'¹

¹ *The Puritan Tradition in English Life* (Cresset Press, 1956), pp. 103-4.

And Mr. Marlowe concludes:

'On the one hand the Puritan tradition has endowed the English people with strength of will, application of mind, energy of body and a deep sense of responsibility. On the other hand, it is suggested, the Puritan tradition has resulted in a widespread and deep-rooted indifference to and even contempt for the element of beauty in the world of man and, it may be added, in the human relations between man and man.'¹

Here Mr. Marlowe is describing an attitude of mind already denounced by Matthew Arnold in nineteenth-century Philistines, and it is easy to see how, given a difficult economic situation forcing a choice of priorities in expenditure, such an indifference to the aesthetic side of life would lead to cheese-paring over what were thought to be 'inessential' items. And here the elevating influence of the aristocracy, to which Arnold pointed in other domains, was not of much help. If the middle classes were culturally Philistine the aristocracy was 'barbarian'. If the public-school system was partially the result of a middle-class adoption of aristocratic values the two attitudes towards culture were sufficiently similar to make sure that the Puritan tradition should also triumph in this domain, where the asceticism of the counting-house joined forces with that of the hunting-field to distrust the creative artist and all that he stood for.² It was, therefore, the very element in the English character, to which, in large measure, the introduction of the Welfare State was due (a man like Sir Stafford Cripps is a typical example of the Puritan social impulse), that also led to the neglect by that state of its cultural responsibilities.³

This explanation, of course, is not necessarily valid for the defects in the English school system to which I have pointed. Here the Puritan aspiration towards individual self-improvement and the association of nonconformity with the struggle for an entirely state-controlled

¹ Ibid., p. 109.

² The English aristocracy did, of course, have some sense of the necessity of public amenities, but they were not resident in the big industrial towns and local government of all the areas of English political life seems to be that least affected by their values.

³ Not that Cripps was a Philistine in any ordinary sense of the word, but I doubt if he would have thought it right or serious to put aesthetic values first, nor do I know of any evidence that, while Chancellor of the Exchequer, he did so.

educational system might have been supposed to work towards an improvement of conditions. But perhaps another characteristic of Arnold's Philistine has affected the issue: the short-sighted pragmatism which leads him to despise intellectual attainments except in so far as they produce practical results (compare the different status of doctor and teacher in English and French society). The enthusiasm for technical education, which has become a wearisome parrot-cry of recent years, and the widespread misunderstanding of the purposes and mechanism of a university, against which Kingsley Amis has protested, are the equivalent on a higher level of the prejudices which lead local authorities to give school buildings priority over teachers.¹ On the university level there can also be added to the Philistine armoury a false egalitarianism which would maintain that anybody except an imbecile can profit from a university without regard to whether or not his presence there clogs an overloaded machine or lowers already depreciated standards of instruction.

GAPS IN WELFARE

Cultural failure, whatever the reasons for it may be and in whatever form it may manifest itself, was bound to be a contributory source of any intellectual's dissatisfaction with the society of the Welfare State, and, in fact, such dissatisfaction has found expression in the form of a debate on the cultural problems posed by the advent of a 'mass society' in this country. This debate will have to be dealt with in the next chapter. In the meanwhile, before going on to discuss the other powerful source of discontent with our present society, I should like to say a word about a complaint of a different nature: the complaint that the Welfare State

¹ 'Nobody who has not seen it in all its majesty—I speak as a university lecturer—can imagine the pit of ignorance and incapacity into which British education has sunk since the war. . . . I am quite sure that a university admissions policy demanding even less than it now demands—for that is what a larger intake means—will wreck academic standards beyond repair. . . . Not only will examining standards have to be lowered to enable worse and worse people to graduate—you cannot let them all in and then not allow most of them to pass—but the good people will be less good than they used to be: this has been steadily happening ever since I started watching in 1949.' 'Lone Voices', *Encounter*, No. 82 (July, 1960). It is only fair to add that many people, including many university teachers, would not agree with Mr. Amis, but his is a reaction which is all the more healthy in that, judging from what appears in the Press on the subject, almost every aspect of higher education except the danger to standards is considered by those politically concerned with it.

is not doing its job and that certain classes of people (notably old-age pensioners and those living on national assistance) are still living in poverty.¹

This is certainly a tangible enough evil, and any government is under an absolute obligation to do something to relieve the plight of what have been called 'the casualties of the Welfare State'. But this task, though fraught with difficulty (in particular that of finding enough people who will take a decent, humane attitude towards the old, the sick and the insane), is an extension of the Welfare State principle, and criticism that it is not being carried out, though possibly discreditable to the government of the day, is not a basic criticism of that principle. There does not appear to be any theoretical conflict over such extensions of the Welfare State; it is technical difficulties—principally finding the money—which delay them.² This issue is not so much something on which parties or politicians might differ as a piece of inefficiency with which the machinery of government and welfare has failed to cope, a slum that has not been cleared.

There is, however, one side of these complaints about gaps in the Welfare State which bears directly upon the subject-matter of this chapter. Whenever the plight of the old or disadvantaged is mentioned the abuses committed by the bureaucracy administering the Welfare State are usually mentioned too. The grounds for complaint are a lack of human feeling, of ordinary kindness even, towards those whom the officials are meant to be helping, a mean pettifogging attitude more suited to a Dickensian workhouse master than to a modern welfare

¹ 'While it seems that we have, to a large extent, reduced the more serious problems of economic dependency arising from unemployment, far less progress has been made in removing other causes of poverty, inequality and chronic ill-health . . . there may be some seven to eight million people today living precariously close to the margins of poverty. Many are old, disabled and handicapped.' Richard M. Titmuss, *The Irresponsible Society*, Fabian Tract 323 (London, 1960), p. 7. Professor Titmuss concludes that 'those who have benefited most from the Welfare State are those who have needed it least'. (p. 10.)

² An excellent case can, of course, be made for a half a dozen, for a score, of extensions to the welfare structure. These things are questions of priorities which will ultimately be decided by the electorate, and it must be said that there appears to be a good deal of public indifference on this score. The *Socialist Commentary* post-election survey of 1959 records that among the attributes of a good party considered most important only 14 per cent of those under twenty-one and 17 per cent of those over that age mentioned the extension of the welfare services. Blame the government by all means, but let us also blame ourselves.

worker.¹ And even where this is not so there is still what Peter Townsend has called 'the double standard of values' in the social services.² It is true that shortage of money provides a legitimate excuse for doing things on the cheap, but anyone who has had to do with petty officialdom will know that it all too frequently suffers from sheer lack of consideration, at best failing to treat those on the other side of the desk with the courtesy which it would extend to any social acquaintance or even to someone the official concerned might meet by chance in the street; at worst revenging a grudge against the world on the unfortunate clientele whom it is intended to serve. As Dr. Young has written, '... it is still true that many petty bureaucrats think that they know what is best for people, and actually seem unaware of the resentment this causes'.³

The consequences of these failings are not hard to foresee. If we take taxation as an example, 'it is natural that you should resent giving money to a bureaucrat, for however good a purpose, when that bureaucrat, when he has the money, so often behaves as though it was his money and not yours'.⁴ Here we encounter what I believe to be the second considerable cause of dissatisfaction with the Welfare State: the increasing pressure exerted by the state on the individual.

This pressure may take various forms. In its more particular manifestations it can lead to cases of individual injustice such as Crichel Down

¹ 'An air of charity, of *noblesse oblige*, clings to the social services; their administrators preserve an astonishing 19th Century attitude of superiority to their "consumers".' Michael Young, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

² 'Too many social services, and not only those concerned with payments of money, are still governed by the belief in a "minimum". These clothes will do for the boys and girls in this children's home; they are cheap but hard wearing. The meals in this institution only cost 15s. a week per person but they give adequate nutrition; the inmates are used to simple meals. The children in this school are far from reaching eleven-plus standards (what do you expect in such a district?); that is why they are housed in an ancient building in classes of fifty. The people queueing up outside this surgery (housing office, labour exchange, welfare office) have been waiting a long time; but they are used to waiting.' Peter Townsend, 'A Society for People', *Conviction* (MacGibbon and Kee, 1958), p. 115. Perhaps it is worth noting in this connection that when there were queues in food offices during the war it was the personal intervention of Lord Woolton, the Minister of Food, which caused chairs to be supplied for those waiting. But then, as head of a big chain of stores, he was used to the idea that the customer is always right. The trouble with a state bureaucracy is that it cannot go out of business. But the sociologists contributing to *Conviction* have refrained from drawing this conclusion.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

and other, less well-known, but possibly worse instances in which official power has been used to infringe the rights of someone too poor and un-influential to put up a fight. In its widest and most diffused form it produces the claustrophobia engendered by living in a society where an increasing mass of rules and regulations necessitate a considerable amount of paperwork on the part of anyone who happens to be a householder and where the system of taxation is so complex that the ordinary citizen cannot hope to obtain his legal rights without employing a tax accountant. The growth of state power can also be responsible for infringements of rights which should be considered as inalienable, such as the right to travel or to live abroad. When the Russian government forbids its citizens to travel this is taken as a sign of the lack of freedom prevailing in the U.S.S.R. When a similar measure is introduced in Great Britain because of a crisis in the balance of payments the official world does not seem to have any realization that it is tampering with a basic principle—quite apart from the effect on students and others of being deprived of contact with foreign countries and their inhabitants. The Treasury, so it has been said, considers foreign travel as a luxury, and, as a result, restrictions were imposed which affected primarily those too young to have foreign friends or those too poor to have funds abroad. It is a characteristic of this type of control that, while it purports to be egalitarian, in practice it never touches people in positions of power, financial or otherwise.¹

This kind of thing (to say nothing of the more horrific abuses of state power which the twentieth century has witnessed) is part of the 'new despotism' exercised by Leviathan over those subject to him, and here again we are far from Arnold's ideal of a beneficent state intervening to improve the lot and raise the moral tone of the individual citizen. R. H. S. Crossman has gone so far as to say that 'the growth of a vast, centralized State bureaucracy constitutes a grave potential threat to social democracy',² and, while he may exaggerate the scope or the immediacy of the menace (the British Civil Service is less of a danger to democracy than most similar bodies—partly because of the class status of its members),

¹ Of course, it can be argued that liberties such as the right to travel abroad have to be surrendered at moments of national emergency, but I should feel happier about this contention if I had any conviction that the implications of such measures were appreciated in Whitehall.

² R. H. S. Crossman, *Socialism and the New Despotism*, Fabian Tract 298 (London, 1956), p. 6.

it is certain that there has been a growing tendency on the part of officials (and also of politicians who should know better) to give the brush-off to complaints from individuals.¹ One result of this process is a widening gap between government and governed. How many of us connect the words 'the public interest' with *our* interest? How many allocutions over the wireless or television make us feel as though the politician concerned were talking about matters which had something to do with us? 'We' has become 'we-and-they', and it is not without interest that whenever any section of the community wishes to saddle another section with some particularly unpleasant responsibility it should make the claim that its opponents are in control of the state (either legally or through the exercise of illicit influence)—presumably with the idea that by associating them with state power they have imparted to them the maximum unpopularity in the eyes of the general public. This process has been aided by an extension of state activity, which has resulted in government responsibility for many everyday things which until recently were the affair of private individuals or corporations. Before the nationalization of the railways, if a train was late, it was the company that was blamed by the irritated passenger. Now it is the government—not only the government as representatives of a political party, but the entire apparatus of state power—that receives the brunt of his anger. Over increasingly wide areas of life it is the state that is held responsible when things go wrong, and this is bound to place a growing strain on its relations with the individual.

Of course, this growth and consequently greater unpopularity of state power have, in themselves, nothing to do with the Welfare State. The wider power of the state and the disregard for individual rights of some of its officials are general phenomena,² which are to be seen in every country in the world regardless of whether it is a welfare state or not. The evolution is due to the improvement in modern communications and hence in techniques of centralized control. The machine-gun has usually been considered as the principal symbolic instrument of

¹ British officials are very much better at considering the feelings of the public than their continental opposite numbers. A considerable effort has been made here to simplify the form-filling and certificate-hunting which the modern world seems to require. Compared with a French government office a British one is arranged for the convenience of the citizen with anxious and loving care.

² 'The modern State, with its huge units of organization, is inherently totalitarian, and its natural tendency is towards despotism.' Crossman, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

modern tyranny, but I am not sure that there would not be a case for giving precedence to the telephone and the card-index.

Plainly, the achievement of social welfare is among the best ends to which this increased state power can be put, but, nevertheless, its application to this end does mean an incursion of the state into many sectors of the lives of individual citizens from which it had formerly been absent. The resulting exercise of authority is not necessarily tyrannical or even particularly irritating. If it does produce tangible injustices these can usually be dealt with in a democratic society. What is far more common—and far more difficult to remedy—is a diffused sense of annoyance, a vague feeling of claustrophobia like that experienced by someone surrounded by a rather clinging family. Nor is the comparison entirely arbitrary. In some continental countries the family unit does provide (or try to provide) something of the security for its members which the Welfare State intends to make available to every citizen: anything from the placing of nephews in advantageous jobs to the supporting of grand-parents when they are no longer able to do it for themselves. The price to be paid is, of course, an incredible amount of petty tyranny and an intolerable degree of inquisition into what most people would consider 'private' affairs. And it might be thought that an official of the Welfare State respects the individuality of the average citizen rather more than a French *conseil de famille* that of an erring junior member. But, just as the Welfare State represents an attempt to spread the comfort and protection afforded by the bourgeois family throughout the whole of society, so it has also spread some of the irritation which such paternalism arouses in its victims or beneficiaries. If the essence of the ethos of a settled (as opposed to a rising) bourgeoisie is to play safe, then its identity with the idea behind the Welfare State is quite apparent, and it can hardly be a matter for surprise that the gap between working class and middle class should be closing or that the annoyance caused by state intervention in the affairs of the individual should resemble that which all too frequently accompanies the ministrations of a well-meaning but fussy maiden aunt.¹

¹ We hear a lot about Welfare State failure to take into account the importance of the 'three-generation family', but this is hardly surprising once it is realized that the replacement of the family and the type of security it provides is one of the basic characteristics of the Welfare State. The trouble is that this replacement is being carried out inefficiently and without sufficient understanding of the services a family can make available to its members.

LIMITED REVOLT

The friction generated by this situation is quite apparent in contemporary England. It can be seen in the way people snap at one another on buses or in post-offices, in outbursts of impotent rage against some immovable abuse, in persistent grumbling on the part of those who have no very obvious reason for dissatisfaction. On a more serious level there is the greater dishonesty of the English upper and middle classes intent on evading government regulations to an extent that would never have been dreamed of before the war, the creation of a fantastic expense-account world where the rich can take refuge from the tax-collector, the very general cynicism about the ability of governments to cope with the country's economic position. Even such features of the contemporary scene as the hooliganism of juvenile gangs seem to be connected with the steady pressure to which modern society submits the young from the moment they are born. That pressure may be beneficent in intention, but it is as natural that it should excite rebellion among those towards whom it is directed as that a son should from time to time have rows with his father. Add to this that modern society provides fewer and fewer safety valves through which potential violence can express itself, and the misdeeds of adolescent gangs, which seem to transcend frontiers and ideologies, become more explicable. They are motivated, so I should guess, to a considerable extent by the increasingly compelling impulse given by the contemporary state towards order and obedience on the part of its citizens.

Most types of revolt are, of course, more limited, and here Mr. Amis's novel *Lucky Jim* is curiously instructive. For, apart from its literary merits, which are indisputable, one of its themes is just this problem of how to behave in face of an intrusive and objectionable superior, against whom rebellion is none the less impossible, and it is, I think, no accident that such a book should have enjoyed such success at the present time. Jim Dixon, the university teacher who is the hero of the book, wishes to have his temporary assistant lectureship turned into a permanent one, and this decision depends upon his superior, Professor Welch, a man he despises both intellectually and morally. If he rebels against him he will be out of a job, and, since he wishes to go on teaching, the rebellion will not have been worth it. How is he to exist in this

situation and at the same time salvage his self-respect? His answer to this problem is what I should call a 'technique of limited revolt'. Instead of swearing at Welch, make faces at him behind his back. Instead of hitting him on the nose, write rude messages about him on the bathroom mirror. The situation is stated in farcical terms, and the solution itself is not particularly heroic, but it is one which is becoming increasingly applicable to the position of the individual in the modern world. I remember once being told by a Polish critic that *Lucky Jim* reminded him of 'the struggle of our young men against Stalinism', and, on thinking it over, this opinion appeared to me less bizarre than it had at first. Limited revolt is all that any individual can afford in a reasonably stable totalitarian state under peace conditions. And, of course, the same difficulty occurs when someone hesitates to enter into total revolt against the demands of the state, not because he feels its tyranny to be so strong that any such action would necessarily bring about catastrophe, but because he regards its intentions as fundamentally benevolent and believes that it would therefore be immoral to aim at their frustration. This is the case of any liberal man who is irritated by certain aspects of the British Welfare State. He cannot reasonably or morally demand its abolition. What is left him is a limited revolt: the evasion of some of its exactions, irony and (in the case of some intellectuals) outbursts of futile rage over trifles.

The two aspects of the society of the Welfare State which have been criticized here—cultural failure and the increased pressure of the state on the individual—derive some of their characteristics from a common source: from the attitudes held by the English middle classes during the nineteenth century. I have blamed a lingering Puritanism for the cultural neglect, that side of Arnold's Philistine which liked 'fanaticism, business and money-making' and which could not be remedied by the values of an aristocracy itself too 'barbarian' to give to culture that help it afforded to political standards. In the other instance it is 'his more relaxed self' given to 'comfort and tea-meetings' which is responsible, not for the increase of state power, but for the kind of state which exercises that power: a kindly, well-intentioned, rather stuffy authority concerned with the spreading of middle-class comfort throughout the community. In other words, if we consider the extension of the power available to the modern state as a separate problem, the flaws in the Welfare State add up to the impregnation of society with the vices of narrowness and

primness stemming from the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie—no doubt, in the first place from the Utilitarians. The spiritual characteristics of the Welfare State have recently been defined as 'utilitarianism, emptiness of ideas and materialism',¹ and it might be thought that, if this definition is just, then most intellectuals would come to feel themselves hostile to a society so conceived. English intellectuals have, indeed, had other motives for hostility. They have disliked the process by which the working classes have become imbued with middle-class values both because it spoiled what had been a pleasantly romantic vision of the English masses and because it left a gap in a system of ideals in which social improvement had played a considerable part. With the arrival of the Welfare State champions of the poor found themselves faced with complex questions of priorities rather than with simple moral imperatives. Just as a liberal desire to do good to other peoples and countries was frustrated by the loss of Britain's power, so an idealistic urge towards bettering the lot of the working classes was thwarted by the partial fulfilment of the ideals themselves. Cultural failure, state pressure, a shortage of causes and ideals—these are all reasons why an English intellectual may be unconsciously dissatisfied with the society in which he lives: the society of the Welfare State.

But that is not the whole story. In fact, the cultural situation of the Welfare State is by no means as bad as might be gathered from a reading of the essays in *Declaration* or of the jeremiads from the various pulpits in the serious Sunday papers. That it should seem bad is comprehensible in view of the fact that the failure has been pre-eminently in the public sector—something which may not be unconnected with the comparatively small effect on political life so far exercised by the generation which has benefited from post-1945 improvements in education. Nor has state power so far been exercised in any consistently tyrannical manner. It remains true that in England it is probably easier for the citizen to obtain redress from the state than in most other countries. Moreover, irritating though the bourgeois values of the Welfare State may be to intellectuals, it should be remembered that behind them lies a desire to help others which is religious in origin and has its roots in the Christian social conscience. Out of Arnold's Philistines, with their narrowness and their limited aspirations towards well-being, came the

¹ By Professor Ingemar Hedenius of the University of Uppsala at a seminar on 'The Writer and the Welfare State' held in Copenhagen during September 1960.

Webbs, who were prepared to extend those aspirations to the whole of society and who, if they did not excel in sweetness, were not lacking in light. The utilitarian urge to clear up cholera-ridden slums and their degraded inhabitants was in itself a powerful moral force which owed everything to middle-class practicality, self-help turned outwards. An ideal of comfort has its points; only those who have never known what it is to be uncomfortable will mock at it.

In fact, most intellectuals have not mocked at it. So impressed have they been by the moral necessity of the Welfare State that they have largely failed to analyse their dissatisfaction with some of its consequences. Believing in the desirability of this form of society, they have felt themselves disinclined to launch any very sweeping attack on it—partly through a failure to bring their own discontents up to the level of consciousness, partly through a dislike of the allies awaiting them in any such assault. Instead, they have projected their disappointment and frustration in the same way as the similar emotions aroused by Great Britain's decline in power were projected towards America. In this case, however, the recipient of accumulated spleen has not been a foreign country but an evil *Doppelgänger* of the Welfare State: what has been called 'the affluent society'.¹

AFFLUENT SOCIETY

The expression 'affluent society' became popular in this country as the result of the publication of a book of that title by Professor J. K. Galbraith, of which the London edition appeared in 1958. The book itself was a reasoned plea for the diversion of more money into the public sector of the American economy, and Professor Galbraith would not consider Britain as falling within his definition of what an 'affluent society' is,

¹ There is, however, a curious parallelism between these two cases of projection. To the opposition moral Britain/immoral America corresponds that within British society of moral welfare state/immoral affluent society. In both instances there is an attribution of one's own vices to an *alter ego* who can then be denounced, and, as with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, it never occurs to the good half of the partnership that the faults he sees in the other may have something to do with his own character. Such are the ways of political Manichaeism. Naturally, this kind of outlook is made easier by the implicit equations Britain=welfare state and America=affluent society—with the unbridled advertising and consumption that this latter term implies.

but the term has come to have a far wider and more emotive extension, particularly on the lips of left-wing members of the Labour Party. Such striking contrasts as 'private affluence: public squalor' were a godsend for them, and it seemed self-evident that criticisms of American society should be relevant to a society confessedly moving towards the American model.

The usual picture conjured up by the phrase is a melodramatic one. The population of Great Britain has been lured by Conservative politicians into a vast spending spree: let loose, like children in a sweet shop, among the refrigerators, the vacuum-cleaners and the motor-cars to spend and spend until outraged Nature reasserts itself, and sadder but wiser boys and girls come crying for nanny and a dose of Mr. Crossman's castor oil.¹ Corrupted from his pristine idealism by deceitful publicity at the service of venial politicians, the average Briton is becoming selfish, careless of his obligations to the underprivileged still existing in his own country or to the underdeveloped existing outside it. Professor Galbraith's 'affluent society' becomes Professor Titmuss's 'irresponsible society' peopled by ad-men, television magnates and manufacturers who are positively eager for customers to buy their wares. Resources are diverted from investment and from aid for those needing it at home and abroad to feed these orgiastic fires. The picture is one of a commercial Saturnalia presided over by a Prime Minister who only approaches the common man in order to give him a shot in the arm.

This condensation of attacks on the 'affluent society' is deliberately

¹ 'A mass demand for profitable but inessential consumer goods and luxuries has been stimulated by extravagantly expensive mass advertising and satisfied at the cost of the public services, but at a satisfactory rate of profit to private industry. The commercialized media of mass communication have been systematically used to dope the critical faculties which would normally have been stimulated by the improvement of popular education since 1945. By the continued application of these methods it may well be possible to keep the British people complacently apathetic, while the social and moral sinews of the national organism are rapidly weakened by fatty degeneration.' R. H. S. Crossman, *Labour in the Affluent Society*, Fabian Tract 325 (London, 1960), pp. 11-12. This rather apocalyptic way of putting things does not indicate much respect either for the workings of political democracy or for the intelligence of Mr. Crossman's fellow countrymen, and one of the latter might be forgiven for feeling, after a reading of the passage quoted, that the complacency was not entirely on his side. However, other utterances from the same political direction show even less patience with *l'homme moyen sensuel*. Cf. Mrs. Barbara Castle's statement about the 1959 election to the effect that the Labour Party's 'ethical reach was beyond the mental grasp of the average person'. This explanation of electoral defeat is certainly beyond mine.

exaggerated to bring out the ridiculous and melodramatic side of them. It is, of course, true that many of the points made against the tone of contemporary British life are perfectly justified. Advertising is frequently dishonest and intrusive. The rich would seem to have got richer and the old-age pensioners poorer over the last few years. The rate of investment, so the experts tell us, is too slow. On the other hand, it is hard to see why the buying of, say, a washing-machine or a refrigerator by working-class housewives should not be considered as a good thing in itself, every bit as much an essential part of welfare as their renting of houses on new estates. Decent housing raises a family's standard of living, but so do washing-machines and refrigerators, which prevent the mother killing herself over the sink or having to go constantly to the shops to buy fresh food. There is no difference between the two cases, despite the fact that the one is an essential part of the Welfare State and the other comes under Mr. Crossman's heading of 'profitable but inessential consumer goods and luxuries'.

As this instance may serve to suggest, the 'affluent society' continues and complements the Welfare State, sharing both its vices and its virtues. Once full employment and certain minimum social services (health, schools, housing, etc.) had been established, it was inevitable that people should wish to improve their homes, to acquire cars, to buy television sets—in other words, to make their choice among the range of consumer goods open to them. There is nothing surprising about this nor is there anything harmful. The urge to improve the conditions in which one lives—to save up to buy this or that—is socially useful in that it makes for harder work and morally respectable in that it is usually directed towards the welfare of the wage-earner's family. It is hard not to become impatient with those who see in such things evidence of degeneration. As Mr. Crosland has written, this type of Pharisaical attitude towards the hopes of others is revolting. Coming from a Gandhi, it might have some significance: on the lips of English politicians, who are certainly not starved of consumer goods themselves, it hardly provokes even a smile.¹ Moreover, those who look with a stern eye on the extravagance of the British people seem to forget how very recently it is that they have had the chance to be extravagant and how many years of effort and austerity had preceded that opportunity. The last five years have marked

¹ See C. A. R. Crosland, 'On the Left Again', *Encounter*, No. 85 (October 1960), pp. 4-5.

the real end of the war from the point of view of the British consumer with some money to burn. Before that there were fifteen years of rationing, and after its end (in the middle of 1954) there was a balance of payments crisis in 1955 and the Suez crisis in 1956. Small wonder that some relaxation of economic pressure should have led to a spending spree. Small wonder that the voters should be resistant to calls made on them in the name of some future and conjectural catastrophe. Seventeen years of strain are enough. In a democratic political system there are limits to what can be asked of the average citizen.

No doubt this view of the 'affluent society' as complementing and continuing the Welfare State also suggests that they share some faults in common. In 1962, with entry into the Community just round the corner, it would probably be better to put more money into productive investment instead of into the purchase of consumer goods for internal consumption. This is a question for professional economists, and I am not competent to decide between those who would prefer some restriction of home consumption and those who hold an expanding home market to be a necessity for an exporting country. But what is fairly clear is that exactly the same criticism can be made of the Welfare State as realized between 1945 and 1951 under the Labour Government. Then, as now, the level of investment was too low, and too much of the national income went into non-productive expenditure.¹ Politically, the failure is fairly easily explicable. Since the war there has been a gradual development of a high-consumption economy benefiting an electorate which, once having tasted its fruits, has become very sensitive to any threat to its continuance. It is not for nothing that the only factor which really seems to affect a government's popularity is economic recession. Since the two main political parties have been rather delicately balanced in terms of votes, and since the complex facts which govern the economic conjecture are not easily explicable to the majority of people, the result has probably been that we have over-indulged ourselves. The difference between the so-called 'welfare state' period and the 'affluent society' period is that during the first the priorities of spending were in theory

¹ Mr. Shonfield, who cannot be suspected of any particular predilection for the Conservative Party, writes: 'We saw . . . that Britain's growth had been disappointingly slow—slower than that of most other countries in Western Europe—during the 1950s. It was certainly no faster in the period of Labour rule during the late 1940s. The recent official estimates of net capital investment . . . show that we did not get back to the prewar rate of growth until 1953.' Shonfield, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

decided by the government, during the second by consumers left to choose the goods which would complete the revolution in their standard of living which the Welfare Services and the abolition of unemployment had begun. In fact, the pressures directing governments and citizens towards a coincidence of choice have been the same, and the final result is that spread of middle-class comfort and middle-class standards throughout large sections of the population to which I have already alluded.¹

Whatever may be the faults and virtues of the society in which we now live—the comfortable society, it might be called—there can be no doubt that the possibility of assembling its shortcomings, calling them the ‘affluent society’ and then proceeding to denounce them, came as a convenient safety-valve for those who had been suppressing their disappointment with the results achieved by the Welfare State. And this mechanism of projection served political as well as personal ends, for it so happened that the delayed rush for consumer goods took place during the term of office of a Conservative Government. If the Labour Party had been in power left-wing Puritans would have had to put up with this consequence of full employment and high wages and even take the credit for it. As it was, they could attack their political opponents and indulge themselves in a delightful feeling of moral superiority at the same time as they released much of the frustration which the years after 1945 had accumulated within them. This, of course, is all in the political day’s work, but it has the disadvantage of preventing any consideration of the real nature of our society or of the real vices from which it is suffering. As long as those intellectuals who can be described roughly as being on the left are able to delude themselves that the things they dislike in contemporary Britain are caused by the perversity of a Conservative Government they are not very likely to produce remedies appropriate to the ills they perceive. Similarly, the troglodytes of the right, who

¹ Minority groups—old-age pensioners and people living on fixed incomes in general—were, of course, bound to suffer during this evolution. In an inflationary economy their demands will never be able to compete with those of the great mass of salary- and wage-earners, whose pressure is more immediate and, therefore, far better adapted to obtain quick results. One feature of the development of British society since the war has been the determination of those whose incomes roughly keep pace with rising prices to ensure that this shall continue to be the case. ‘Fair shares’ no longer seems an inspiring slogan for this majority. Perhaps this is simply one instance—rather a bad one—of a more general tendency towards the neglect of minority interests in political democracies.

cannot understand that the Welfare State has come to stay, are so concerned with cutting it back that they will never make it more efficient. To decide where the blame for a given situation lies before having analysed it correctly is to deprive oneself of any power of changing it for the better. Much of English political life now seems to be haunted by such sterility.

PROBLEMS EVADED

The two real enemies of the Welfare State—cultural failure and intrusive pressure from a state whose middle-class values seem boring to the intellectual or idealist—are less easily dealt with than an ‘affluent society’ created to be the Aunt Sally of an opposition front bench. However, it has not been my intention in this chapter to attempt an apologia for those who have governed us during the last decade. Once England’s problems are posed in their simplest terms it is easy to see how they have been ignored and evaded, how no really decisive step had been taken towards solving them until last year’s decision to ask for membership of the European Economic Community. If there has been no outstanding blunder (apart from Suez), at no time has much sense of direction been imparted to the country, and it has usually been the positive gestures that have not been made. At best, government has been the avoidance of mistakes. At worst, it has been muddled and indecisive. In this limbo the tone of national life has suffered. It is possible, I think, without excess or priggishness to find the rich unpleasantly rich and the luxurious vulgarly luxurious. As for politicians, all too often they have shared the general lack of inspiration, showing themselves niggling and lacking in generosity where they were not archaic in their opinions or pompous in their manners.¹ The symptoms of national *malaise*, if *malaise* there be, are subtle and not to be distributed in terms of party or class. That *laissez-faire* has become *laissez-aller* is not a statement of economic doctrine but a reference to a general decline in standards in that indefinable but decisive area of a nation’s organism where the intellectual faculty joins the moral. At the moment England is

¹ Naturally, individual politicians have behaved with sense and courage and conscience—many examples could be given—but the general level of politics during the late fifties and early sixties has not been distinguished, and one gets the impression that the ‘national’ speech is rarer than it used be.

pre-eminent neither in power nor in wisdom nor in beauty. We have lost the world, and we have not gained our own soul.

There might be more to say about the responsibility of the government for this lowering of tone, this flight from ideals, but one of the things which I have been concerned to emphasize in this chapter is that when faced with this or other disagreeable features of contemporary England it is quite useless to blame them on the fleeting political constellation of the moment. All governments are guilty, and that which holds office in 1962 no less than those that have preceded it, but governments hardly possess the power to bring about (or to halt) a general social and historical evolution of the type which has transformed our society. They may make use of it or strive futilely to delay it, but the impulses behind Britain's loss of power in the world or the creation of the British Welfare State are too profound for any political party to be blamed or praised because of them, though it might well be held to be criminally stupid did it not realize that such great movements exist. To say that any such evolution, or any of its characteristics, is 'the government's fault' is to fail to understand it or to grasp the connection of its parts. And the measures proposed on this assumption will be powerless to affect the symptoms for whose cure they are intended.

As regards the particular evils that have afflicted the Welfare State, cultural failure, at least, has stirred up a considerably more animated debate than any other of our numerous discontents. The fact that nowadays so many 'causes' should be cultural rather than political in nature shows that the gap in our national life has at least attracted notice, though the debate on how it should be filled has been confused by the rather muddled conceptions of what culture is, which have been brought into play. As for the intrusiveness of state power and the consequent moral pressure brought to bear on the individual, this is more difficult even to talk of remedying. The spread of state power is common to all civilized (and even to some uncivilized) countries, and it is especially felt when it is exercised by an efficient and incorruptible Civil Service such as that which exists in Britain. A little corruption and nepotism slackens the tension wonderfully; there is always a great difference between how tyrannical a regime appears to the intellectual reading its constitution and laws and how tyrannical it actually is towards the average inhabitant, and that difference is largely due to the differing levels of efficiency of various state bureaucracies. The more modern and better-run a dictatorship

is, the more of a tyranny it must be.¹ But this is a digression, and it would be carrying paradox rather far to demand inefficiency in the British Civil Service for the sake of public *morale*. There seems to be little that can be done apart from obvious palliatives, whose detail is tedious enough: more opportunities for recourse to the courts, better manners on the part of minor officials, simplification of procedures, etc., etc. Perhaps the pressure of the state as we feel it is an instance of the stiffening of our national joints, the onset of that ossification of a society in which I should be tempted to see the real sense of the word decadence. If so, it must wait until the conclusion of this book. The debate on England's culture, on the other hand, can be discussed immediately.

¹ This is one refutation of those who tell us of the wonderful new schools in some dictatorship or other. Schools in a totalitarian state are not institutions of education; they are instruments of tyranny—its most effective instruments. It is, therefore, as foolish to congratulate the regime on their existence as it would be to show pleased surprise at the improving tracts in a prison library.

THE CULTURAL DEBATE

In my profession as a writer I have never asked myself how I may be of service to the whole. But always I have only sought to make *myself* better and more full of insight, to increase the content of my own personality, and then only to express what I had recognized as good and true.

GOETHE

*Sie haben volle Gesichter,
auch Lippen mit Rouge baisier,
wer wollte als Rächer und Richter
hier sagen: Entschminke dich, geh?*

They have plump faces and lips with Rouge baisier lipstick too; who would wish to say here as avenger and judge: Go on, take off your make-up?

GOTTFRIED BENN

Before entering into the present debate concerning the quality of English culture it is as well to be reminded by the quotation from Goethe which I have set at the head of this chapter that those who create culture—art, music, literature, philosophy and science—must necessarily be more indifferent to society than society is to them. This does not mean that they do not care what happens in the world around them, but it does mean that for them the supreme value must be their own power of self-expression in words, paint or notes of music, their own struggle with the enigmas of Nature or the paradoxes of the human situation. It is this creative egotism which has always made it so difficult to press writers and artists into the services of causes foreign to their inner imperative. For them the supreme importance of what they have to say provides

the only hypothesis which can enable them to continue their exacting task of creation. They can no more cast doubt on it than a doctor can doubt the utility of saving people from death. In both cases a value has to be assumed in order to enable work to be done, and thereby justifies itself whatever philosophical points can be made against it. To believe that poets are the unacknowledged law-givers of mankind is the only alternative to believing them to be ineffectual angels.

It seems useful to state this clearly at the outset, since so much recent discussion of English culture has centred on the way in which culture is received and diffused by society rather than on the way in which it is created by the artist. In the dialectic between society and the artist it is always the first term that is analysed, and this, of course, is not altogether surprising.¹ Most of those who consider the subject have a well-founded suspicion that nothing very much can be done about the processes which take place inside the artist's skull. Many of those concerned for the stability of society would like to brainwash him; some of them have actually succeeded in silencing him; but nobody has yet been able to force him to sing their own song and to sing in tune. The lamentable fiasco of orthodox Soviet literature shows the limits of what can be done in this field, however totalitarian the intention of the controllers.

It follows from this that *from the point of view of those producing culture* all such expressions as 'bourgeois culture', 'working-class culture', etc., are misplaced metaphors drawn from sociology or politics. Artists, writers, musicians primarily express themselves and not their class or the historical situation, and, though Marxists may contest the 'objective' truth of this statement, a belief in their task of self-expression is certainly the most important motivating factor impelling onward those concerned with artistic creation. This confidence that *I* (and not history) am writing a novel, that *I* (and not the imperialist-capitalist-bourgeoisie-in-their-decline) am painting an abstract picture is another part of the creative hypothesis, and an important one, since it throws into relief certain

¹ This also applies to the relationship between society and the consumer of culture—of mass-culture above all. Most recent utterances on the subject neglect the very real forgetfulness of self and stirring of the imagination entailed in the enjoyment of the most hackneyed film or television play. There is a thrill in these things which is not necessarily that of the drug addict and in which, because human psychology is neither particularly logical nor its transitions particularly apparent, it is easy for society to miss an emotion of a higher nature than the shoddy work that stimulated it.

ambiguities in the use of the word 'culture' which have bedevilled recent argument on the subject.

DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE

The placing of an adjective before 'culture' assists a confusion of meanings which is sufficiently important to require elucidation here, tedious though this may be. In fact, there is a vital distinction to be made between *culture* and *a culture*, which the use of terms such as 'bourgeois culture' tends to obscure. In the latter ethnological use of the word, when, for instance, we speak of 'Aztec culture' or 'Dyak culture', there is implied a total unified way of life informed by common beliefs and made possible by the strongly integrated tribal societies to be found among primitive peoples. To talk of 'modern English culture' or 'cultural activities' is to mean something quite different: those creative and largely intellectual activities which are recognized as dictating the aesthetic and, to a considerable degree, the moral tone of a civilized society. When Raymond Williams defines 'working-class culture' as 'the basic collective idea, and the institutions, manners, habits of thought and intentions which proceed from this', he is using culture in its ethnological (or sociological) sense.¹ It can, of course, so be used, but then the user must be careful not to carry over into it any presuppositions from its original application to primitive societies, and nobody who has read Mr. Williams's arguments in favour of a 'unified culture' can say that he has entirely escaped that danger. Indeed, his thesis appears to run so contrary to the known facts of cultural history that it can most easily be explained by a prior assumption that a culture held in common is the norm from which present and past variety represents a deplorable deviation.

Nor should it be thought that, say, the Transport and General Workers' Union is the product of working-class culture in the same way as Cézanne is the product of bourgeois culture or that the two are comparable in any respect. In fact, in an advanced community the expression of attitudes such as Mr. Williams's 'basic collective idea' or 'basic individualist idea' will itself have been formed by culture in the more restricted sense. If a vague belief in equality is part of the English working-class ethos it is because of Rousseau, because of Bentham, because of Marx—in other words, behind it stands a tradition of radical thought

¹ *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Chatto and Windus, 1958), p. 327.

which has filtered down through society until it is reproduced in a more or less unrecognizable form in pub talk of 'we' and 'they'. The culture of a modern society is the result of purposeful and voluntary thought and creative activity in a way in which, let us say, the traditional sexual taboos accepted by a savage are not. Today's *culture* can produce a *culture* tomorrow, and, if the position of English culture is to be discussed, the emphasis must be on the more restricted meaning of the word, as it is only through a rise in the quality and an enlargement in the dissemination of culture considered as thought, literature, science and the arts that any improvement of culture considered as a total way of life can be expected.

The confusion caused by this terminological difficulty is tiresome, and, as I have already said, it becomes particularly obtrusive when some such phrase as 'the product of bourgeois (aristocratic, working-class) culture' is used to describe an individual artist or work of art. It is philosophers, scientists, writers, artists and musicians who produce a *culture*, whether aristocratic or bourgeois, and not the other way round. When Matthew Arnold emphasized the part of effort contained in the idea of culture it was this impulsion given to society by a minority which he had in mind.¹ Whether he likes it or not every writer and artist inculcates standards, if not for his own age, then for ages after him.

In so defining *culture* I do not mean to deny that it may be influenced by the total way of life of the society from which it springs. Obviously it is so influenced. All that I am trying to suggest is that it differs from a *culture*, and that the two expressions cannot be used as if they were identical, nor can characteristics of the one be applied to the other. Unfortunately, when the article is omitted the two usages can appear identical. A phrase such as 'medieval culture' contains two concepts, although in this case they are less far apart than they would be in the case of a more aggressively individualistic society. But, naturally, there is interaction. In *The Divine Comedy* Dante produced an expression of

¹ 'The moment this view of culture is seized, the moment it is regarded not solely as the endeavour to see things as they are, to draw towards a knowledge of the universal order which seems to be intended and aimed at in the world, and which it is a man's happiness to go along with or his misery to go counter to—to learn, in short, the will of God—the moment, I say, culture is considered not merely as the endeavour to *see* and *learn* this, but as the endeavour, also, to make it *prevail*, the moral, social, and beneficent character of culture becomes manifest.' *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. by J. Dover Wilson (Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 46-7.

what came near to being the total life of his age (while possibly understating the grosser side of the medieval character), but also (and perhaps more importantly) he formed the Italian language by his example in such a way that the purity of his style became part (and not the least active part) of the total life of ages after him. The makers of culture can be said to order and transmit to future time the total life of their age. This they could not do were they completely divorced from it, but neither could they do it if they did not stand a little way off from it. *Culture* can provide most of the spiritual data of a *culture* and simultaneously a principle of transmission, so that the particularities of an age can take their place in a general inheritance. Of a *culture*, *culture* is usually what is left to us. It is certainly what is relevant.¹

CULTURE INTO POLITICS

With this definition of culture in mind it is easier to discuss its situation in England today as well as the various proposals that have been made for the improvement of that situation. In my last chapter I put forward the idea that the Welfare State has been widely considered to be a cultural failure in that the expectations which had been raised by it have not been fulfilled. I do not intend to repeat the instances of that failure which I gave, but I should like to point to one important development in the political sphere which seems to stem from it as well as from that lessening interest in pure politics which is a result of Great Britain's post-war diminution of power.

Writing in the *Manchester Guardian* in August 1958, David Marquand pointed out that young Socialists at Oxford tended to see the reforms, which they would wish to carry out, more in cultural than in economic or political terms. A similar diagnosis is implied by Mr. Williams when he writes:

'We should be much clearer about these cultural questions if we saw them as a consequence of a basically capitalist organization, and I at least know no better reason for capitalism to be ended. It is significant that the liveliest revolt against the existing system, particularly among the new young generation, is in precisely these cultural terms.'²

¹ Cf. Dr. Leavis's definition quoted above, p. 52, n. 1.

² *The Long Revolution* (Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 339.

From a different direction we have 'Taper' affirming in the *Spectator* that he would vote for any party which would introduce a series of reforms, most of which can be described as cultural in quality. And Mr. Crosland's book *The Future of Socialism*, while containing in its conclusion proposals for better welfare services, greater equality and more efficient management of the national economy, also has sections headed 'Liberty and Gaiety in Private Life' and 'Cultural and Amenity Planning'. No doubt this represents a return to Ruskin and Morris, but these are not considerations which have been much in the minds of reforming politicians since then. To do them justice, they have been too busy with other things.¹

In an earlier chapter I drew attention to the comparatively tame character of those 'causes' which nowadays compete for the support of liberal intellectuals. These are frequently to be found existing in a domain where moral conviction blends into taste, the ethical into the cultural. For instance, the argument most frequently used against the continuance of capital punishment is that it is barbarous and produces a barbarizing effect on the society which makes use of it. The case for the abolition of hanging is argued from the admitted unpleasantness of the operation in preference to lines of attack which are perhaps logically more cogent—for instance, that the death penalty assumes a perfection in the English system of justice which has certainly never existed in any human institution. Even without the Evans case it was always quite obvious that innocent men were liable to be condemned to death, for the same reasons that innocent men are known to have been imprisoned for burglary. Similarly such diverse subjects of public dispute as the implementation of the Wolfenden Report, the behaviour of the Royal Family, the censorship of books and plays, are discussed along lines which can broadly be called cultural. Reform in many fields is not so much claimed to be 'right' as the old system is felt to be 'ugly' or 'stuffy'. Even the increased emphasis in progressive political programmes on social, as against economic, equality raises an issue which has more cultural than political implications,² though, no doubt, political action would be required to produce it. In the first Aldermaston march (before the movement was

¹ I imagine that Mr. Crosland's conception of liberty and gaiety would differ greatly from the 'Merry England' which Ruskin and Morris had in mind. The contrast is not without its piquancy.

² 'It is by the humanity of their manners that men are made equal.' Matthew Arnold, 'Equality', *Mixed Essays*, p. 68.

changed into a weapon against the present leadership of the Labour Party) there was an atmosphere of aesthetic choice rather than of sturdy moral conviction, and it was this feature of the march which struck most independent observers.

What I am suggesting here is not that there is no moral fervour involved in these causes but that the way in which they are chosen and subsequently furthered by their devotees is quite unlike that in which, say, a Victorian teetotaler chose and furthered total abstinence. The Puritan fire has gone out of us. In practice ethics have usually been a matter of taste—of good taste in the strict sense of the word; there is never time for anything other than an instinctive reaction. Nowadays, in the absence of transcendence what is left to us is manners, a mode which assumes relativity and a necessity for practical compromise in human relations. Manners are a way of respecting other people, and it is unlikely that causes selected by the criteria which they provide will be pursued with great fanaticism. The Victorians were humanitarians; we are humane—and in this distinction there is expressed a real, if still partial, passage from moral feeling to taste.

At a time when manners and taste decide choices, which might otherwise be made upon moral grounds, culture and the creators of culture (in its narrower sense) will take on an increased social importance. Since there is no assured and generally accepted system of values, art and science provide a source of directives on matters which their qualifications for considering are not obvious.¹ At the present time the views of artists, writers and scientists are widely thought to be of value on subjects—such as foreign affairs or the reform of the Civil Service—about which they frequently know nothing. And, by a complementary process, many of those whose job it is to write about politics do so from the standpoint of someone considering a cultural object, a play or a performance on television.

This blending of politics into culture is to culture's advantage—to the advantage of its influence, not necessarily of its quality. Politics itself, however, will tend to suffer from the association, the ultimate result of

¹ The process by which moral issues are decided and presented in cultural terms can give rise to ambiguities. Dr. F. R. Leavis has produced a system of Puritan morality in the form of a study of the English novel—*The Great Tradition* (Chatto and Windus, 1948)—but it is not quite certain who is using whom. In a general way it can be said that moralists now prefer to call themselves literary critics. As Daniel Halévy once wrote, '*Qui jugera les hommes de lettres?*'

which is the state of mind that is to be found among many young supporters of C.N.D., where banning the Bomb, Socialism, good modern architecture and the accoutrements of Bohemianism all take on something of an equivalent importance as gestures against everyday conformity. In this *mêlée* the political loses its priority, and that in the very sphere of action where its claim to be considered first is irrefutable. What is done is dictated more and more by tone and less and less by belief organized towards an end, and tone is the direct product of culture in its widest sense and has its original source in culture in its narrower, but intenser, meaning. Combine this trend with the diminution in interest of purely political causes and it is clear that the Oxford students who see the reforms they wish to achieve in cultural rather than political terms are more representative of their time than those who hammer away at the political issues of thirty years ago. This does not mean that they are likely to be more successful in getting what they want, but that they provide a convenient example of the change which has come over the English left since the war.¹

T. S. ELIOT

Criticism of the present state of English culture has usually come from those holding left-wing political views. On the right—quite apart from that element in Conservatism which simply desires to keep things as they are—there is a more empirical attitude towards reform. To this state of mind having dogmatic ideas about culture is dangerous and their realization not a legitimate domain for political action, while the fact that issues such as 'equality' or the advantages and disadvantages of an élite are raised by such questionings in itself makes them suspect. The word that most often occurs when a person of a genuinely conservative cast of mind discusses culture is 'tradition', and this is not necessarily the hallmark of literary or artistic reaction. A large number of those most closely associated with the study and judgement of art and literature are conservatives in this sense and none the worse for it. They are concerned to see continuity between past and present, and they are suspicious of general cultural theories, partly because so many of them are presented in terms of arid dogma and appear to be an infringement of their liberty.

¹ Much the most important and original aspect of *New Left Review* is its utterances on cultural questions. These are what give it its *narodnik* tone.

Similarly, many creators of culture, though themselves revolutionaries in their practice of their art or science, dislike being asked to think about culture in general terms. They think of themselves as writing a poem or painting a picture or discovering an unknown virus rather than as changing the course of culture, and they see all too clearly the impossibility of legislating for cultural improvement except in the most indirect way.

The only conservative theory of culture at present current in England is that to be found in the writings of T. S. Eliot. His view of culture envisages a unity in diversity, the unity coming from an informing religious belief and the diversity from a social hierarchy of functions which is not inflexible, but will continue to exist, whatever scope it may afford to the individual for change from one class to another. From the top of the cultural pyramid are transmitted refining and educative influences, from its base arise the harshness and the strength needed for creative work. All its constituents participate in a greater or less degree in a common cultural tradition which is common just because its mainstay is a system of religious belief to which all can adhere though with unequal understanding. Holding the view that Mr. Eliot does of the importance of tradition in cultural creation, it is hardly surprising that he should view with some scepticism the prospects for planned cultural improvement. The idea of one moment in time trying to divert the course of the continuum has in it something of the disproportion between Canute and the sea.

The merit of Mr. Eliot's theory of culture is that it places in the foreground the aristocratic element involved in its creation. And it is possible to assent to this without drawing any of the consequences which right-wing political philosophy has been accustomed to deduce from it (the great error of theorists on the right has usually been to judge political phenomena by the cultural criterion). On the other hand, it is hard to imagine how religious belief can be a unifying factor in modern culture. Historically, it is, no doubt, the case that culture has traditionally been based on religion, and in particular the common Christianity of Western Europe has certainly been a fortunate thing for Western culture. But we are now in a position where religious belief is breaking down, and, just as in the field of ethics we have to do without transcendence and rely on manners instead, so in the field of communication we must discard common belief and rely on a common language: that is, a common

method of experiment in belief. So that our culture will depend not so much upon what people believe as upon how they believe it. Ever since the nineteenth century poets have used myths as a research student uses hypotheses—not because they were necessarily true, but because they have sufficient probability to help in the creation of poetry. Now for our culture in its widest sense the unifying factor may be one of tone. It is hard to see how it can be one of direction. The restoration of the conditions which Mr. Eliot would regard as ideal for a society's culture would imply a sort of lifting of ourselves up by the hair, an exercise in spiritual gymnastics which the educated Englishman of the twentieth century seems peculiarly unfitted to undertake.¹

At the opposite pole from Mr. Eliot's serious and austere cultural ideal lies a decadent conservatism in which respect for tradition either hardens into a dry scholasticism or encourages a sentimental nostalgia. Both these attitudes, so inhibiting to creative originality, are to be found as ingredients in the literary instruction usually meted out at universities. I have already remarked upon the extent to which nostalgia was rife in England during and after the war, no doubt encouraged as much by a desire for luxurious living as by any very consistent view of a causal connection between country houses and mandarin prose. In fact, any such connection would be hard to establish and dangerous to proclaim. One need have no particular objection, apart from a fleeting twinge of envy, to someone speaking of the delightful time he has had and the delicious food and drink he has consumed, while carrying on a witty and cultivated conversation, but it should be recognized that all this has little to do with the making of art or literature—let alone science—and may even actively discourage it. Genius has the digestion of an ostrich, but if you forbid it to live on anything except peaches-and-cream in a society where there is little of either you will be condemning it to a starvation diet. In this case respect for tradition will be stifling and culture killed by hallowing rather than by a failure to appreciate it.

Of course, the direct Puritan aversion to considering cultural values as anything other than marginal in the scheme of things is also damaging,

¹ I am not sure that the idea of culture arising out of religion is true historically. *A culture* is necessarily informed by the religion which dominates it, but *culture* in the more limited sense seems to arise when religion has passed the zenith of its intensity. Tragedy, for instance, appears to be the result of a clash between declining religious belief and an independent ethical judgement. The relationship is dialectical rather than causal.

and, in local government at any rate, is particularly prevalent on the right, where it combines with a dislike of state or municipal action in this field to quash what schemes are put forward to buy 'modern' pictures for a city gallery or abstract pieces of sculpture to place in playgrounds or schools. Recently, Conservative members of the Nottingham City Council have done their best to ensure that their town shall not have a municipal theatre. The vulgar right-wing attitude towards culture is that we don't want anything of that sort here—an attitude which is vociferously supported by a section of the Press—understandably because any general rise in the level of English critical sense would put them out of business.¹

CULTURE AND THE NEW LEFT

From Mr. Eliot to the 'popular' Press is a far cry, and his theory of what English culture should be remains isolated, having found few disciples and arousing little discussion. It is from the left that most of the criticism of present trends in English culture has come. The most coherent theory of our present cultural state is to be found developed—with varying degrees of intelligence—in *New Left Review* and (with far more power and subtlety) in the writings of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams. With differences of emphasis and greater or less confusion of terminology the main points of the theory which can be deduced from these sources (and which has become the doctrinal mainstay of Mr. Marquand's young Oxford Socialists) are as follows:

- (1) There should be more culture. (More state support for the arts, science, etc.)
- (2) English culture (and particularly the culture of the working

¹ It is difficult to generalize about the respective hostility to culture of right and left in England. Manchester, for example, with a Labour majority on the council is certainly less imaginative and progressive in its support of culture than the more Conservative Liverpool. What is true is that Conservatives are more likely to object in principal to expenditure on cultural amenities—especially at a local level. On a national level the Conservative Party has a better record than Labour, Mr. Macmillan's government being the only administration since the war to raise the grants for museums and galleries to a more adequate level. Nor is indifference always to be blamed on a handful of stupid councillors. The derisory sum of money raised by public subscription in the city of Manchester to acquire a Rubens shows that suspicion of art also operates among the general public and is not confined to the startlingly modern. The Rubens in question went to Liverpool.

- classes) is being corrupted by an unscrupulous use of the mass-media of communication by commercial interests who are ready to use debasing material to attract large audiences. They have forced commercial television through Parliament and would legalize horror comics if they thought that this would sell an ounce more of detergent. (The corollaries of this include attacks on the popular Press, independent television, advertising agencies, Hollywood and, quite often, on America, regarded as the great prototype of this corrupting process and of the capitalism that is said to engender it.)
- (3) English culture should be 'unified'. (This involves the abolition of 'élite' culture and 'élite' education as well as the approval of such activities as jazz or Association football, which are assumed to be in some sense 'popular', and the advocacy of a certain measure of *proletkult* in art and literature.)

These theories are very much the fashion nowadays and fragments of them are likely to crop up in any general discussion of English culture. They are, therefore, worth looking at with some care, both with the aim of elucidating the presuppositions which they conceal and of estimating to what extent they are a sound basis for that improvement we all desire to see. Usually another point is added to the three I have outlined. Writers and artists generally (not scientists!) are recommended to become 'committed'—a piece of advice which usually boils down to a commitment to advocate the beliefs of the critic from whom the recommendation comes. If, on the other hand, as in a recent book on the subject, so wide a definition of 'commitment' is adopted that it comes to imply merely the possession by the artist of some coherent world view, this is no more and no less than has been required of him for many centuries. As used in this country 'commitment' means either propaganda or platitude, and there is little point in putting it alongside the other, relatively serious issues raised by the debate on English culture.¹

¹ In France, of course, *engagement* is a more serious matter. Sartre's theory of literature is supported by an elaborate philosophical and psychological apparatus, which few English adepts of 'commitment' show much sign of having mastered. Sartre would take the view that only the manifestation of attitudes which he himself approves or, at any rate, does not condemn can constitute a 'commitment'. A Fascist 'commitment', say, would be a contradiction in terms in so far as the word is used as an expression of approbation. The literary theory contained in *Qu'est-ce que la Littérature?* is one of Sartre's weakest productions. The holes in it are so numerous that it would be superfluous to point them out here.

The first of the statements about English culture which I have listed above takes us back to the cultural failure of the Welfare State. It is a plea for getting rid of those Puritan and Philistine inhibitions which make culture and those who produce it of marginal importance when it comes to distributing public money. This is a sentiment with which it is easy to agree, though it should be added that those who share it do not always seem to realize to what an extent the Puritan attitudes they are attacking form a whole. The same set of values which makes a Treasury official or a town-clerk consider culture as expendable also keeps them from seeking personal financial gain from their positions. There is a paradox involved in demanding more Puritan rigour in the behaviour of the police force and less in that of divorce-court judges. However, it is impossible not to agree that our national expenditure on culture is something of a scandal, even if we throw in education, and once embarked on a discussion of this kind one becomes aware that the preservation or destruction of Puritan values is not a matter of choice. They are already dissolving, and in future we may well find ourselves with better architecture and a less honest Civil Service.

On the other hand, there is a curious contradiction which stands in the way of effective public aid to the arts. As has been suggested in the last chapter, the committee system of patronage is unsuited to the discovery of great artistic originality. Nevertheless, it is fairly cheap and easy for the state or a city to keep a novelist or painter while he produces a novel or a painting. What they cannot be sure of is the quality of the end-product; most probably it will be fashionable and derivatory with just a sufficient touch of modernity to make the patron committee feel it is getting something *avant-garde*. In the field of town-planning or the financing of opera, however, the case is altered. The state can be reasonably sure that it can keep an opera-house going. The city can be certain of imposing a relatively decent standard of town-planning upon a district due for development. In these instances the authorities in question are the only forces which can carry out such projects at all, so that questions of comparative quality enter into the argument only secondarily. But, since this kind of activity costs very large sums of money, and (as regards town-planning) is subject to pressure from financial interests, it is far harder to initiate than the simple subsidy to the individual. So that any attempt to gain public support for culture is faced by the paradox that the easiest forms in which that support can be given are liable to render

poor returns, while those which might guarantee a rise in standards are the most difficult to get started and carry through. Public help for the arts (and science does not concern me here, since there are many directly utilitarian arguments which will always ensure it help and support from the state) is best given for objects which fall into the public domain, but which, for that very reason, require the kind of money no private individual can afford and are liable to all the constrictions and economies normally affecting government or municipal expenditure.

Arnold Wesker has recently called on the trade unions to interest themselves in subsidizing English culture, and there is certainly a case to be made for appealing to all wealthy corporations, whether trade unions or companies. But these can hardly take on the sort of cultural improvement which is needed in the public sector, while, on the individual level, they are hardly more likely to choose the best young novelist for the receipt of their bounty than a governmental committee. This is not a reason for their doing nothing, but it is a reason for not expecting too much from the result. Probably the best course they could pursue would be to give their money—which, if the Exchequer had an atom of sense, would thereby become exempt from tax—to increase the funds of those institutions which suffer from governmental parsimony. Fifty thousand pounds given to the Tate Gallery would be better spent than the same amount of money frittered away on the local ‘festivals’ which have now become something of a disease, or on repertory companies which are never going to establish themselves.¹

The view of present-day English culture which concentrates attention on its failures in what I have called the public domain as well as on the lack of guidance and encouragement on the part of the state is, indeed, a partial one. In fact, the producer of culture in this country cannot be said to be particularly badly off. If he is a writer he will have the vast English-speaking market overseas open to his works as well as a growing market at home. If he is an artist or a musician he will find that the appetite for art and for music is growing, that sections of the population

¹ What Mr. Wesker actually has in mind in the way of practical steps to improve English culture is gruesomely revealed in a recent article ‘The Secret Reins’ (*Encounter*, March 1962). Here he quotes with approval the idea of holding ‘Trade Union Weeks’ described as ‘a mixed bag of events from lectures on the industrial health service to mannequin parades and folksinging evenings’. After this it is no surprise to find the authentic handwoven note creeping into his reference to ‘a tiny, worried trades council’. *Lucky Jim* might have been written in vain!

which never did so before the war are now going to concerts and buying pictures or reproductions of pictures. The existence of an enlarged and expanding audience for serious reading is indicated by the success of Penguin and Pelican books—perhaps the most significant symptom that mass education is producing some result. This new audience also represents a change in taste, but, by comparison with the twenties and thirties, this change is towards being more, not less, serious. There is a preference for archaeology rather than connoisseurship, for history rather than autobiography. Perhaps we have gone some way towards recapturing a Victorian gravity and passion for self-improvement. If that is so, we shall gain other things as well.¹

These hopeful aspects of contemporary English culture—and I could have mentioned many more of them—have largely been neglected by the left-wing cultural theorists. It is fairly easy to see why. If one believes with Mr. Williams that 'We should be much clearer about these cultural questions if we saw them as a consequence of a basically capitalist organization' then it is obvious that the quality of English culture is going to be condemned from the start, since we can all gather without too much trouble what Mr. Williams feels about 'a basically capitalist organization'. It is no surprise when he concludes 'and I at least know of no better reason for capitalism to be ended'.² Moreover, because these theorists are interested in getting something done about the condition of English culture and because the only machinery which they believe to be available for such action is that afforded by the state, they have naturally concentrated their attention on the cultural failure in the public sector and neglected the modest grounds for optimism with which the condition of the individual writer or even reader might have provided them. It is true that when their eye roved in the direction of the individual it was caught by a far more sinister and spectacular phenomenon: the effect on him of the material with which he has been so liberally bombarded through the media of mass communication.

¹ I am told that Mr. Connolly's *Enemies of Promise* (Routledge, 1938) is now a popular book among people in their early twenties. This, however, does not invalidate my point (and, besides, I am all for anyone liking *Enemies of Promise*): there is no reason why seriousness of mind should prevent anyone enjoying a very readable book which is also rather serious beneath the glitter of its prose.

² *The Long Revolution*, p. 339.

MERCHANTS OF SPACE

As was hinted in the last chapter, merchants of advertising space hold something of the same position in the mythology of the left today as was held by armaments manufacturers in the twenties and thirties. They (heads of television networks, directors of advertising agencies, newspaper proprietors, publishers of pulp literature, film producers) are said to be corrupting public taste and morals in a number of ways. First, directly by making an appeal to the baser instincts of their audience, by pumping it full of eroticism and violence in the most extreme case, more usually by feeding it enervating and sentimental nonsense or inculcating a false ideal of middle-class 'gracious living'. Secondly, indirectly, by distracting their audience from using its leisure in more creative types of activity than the absorption of mass-produced fantasies and by destroying valuable local or regional characteristics. Thirdly, by subjecting the British people to a stream of advertising material creating a demand for goods which they would otherwise not want (or not want to the same extent), thereby producing a frame of mind intent on 'keeping up with the Joneses' and diverting national resources from other and more useful tasks.¹ These criticisms are associated with attacks on a system which places the power to influence the public mind in the hands of a few rich men. The tone of English life, so it is said, is being lowered for purely commercial reasons without any consideration of the possible effects of the material put out through television, film, Press or paperbacks.

How much of this is true? Some of the more far-fetched accusations can be dismissed fairly rapidly. Despite the fact that magistrates have been blaming pernicious literature ever since the Victorian penny dreadful and the cinema ever since it came into being, there is little real evidence to suggest that the misdeeds of juvenile and not so juvenile delinquents are caused by what they see or read except in the most indirect way. Whatever the reaction to a gangster film or a horror comic may be,

¹ 'To permit the free operation of a whole industry devoted to increasing consumption among the satisfied while others are still starving is against all humanity and decency. . . . If the answer to the vicious nonsense of advertising seemed to be a thumping tax, then the higher it was the more would Britain be able to sink in the capital development of poor countries.' Wayland and Elizabeth Young, *The Socialist Imagination*, Fabian Tract 326 (London, 1960), p. 12. This suggestion seems more remarkable for sound moral sentiment than for acquaintance with economics. However, it lives up to the title of the pamphlet.

everything goes to support the view that it is not of the simple 'X = X' type. Indeed, an urge to violence seems as likely to be sublimated as encouraged by the sight of it on the screen or the printed page. This is not to say that watching sexy or sadistic spectacles is an occupation to be recommended to the young—perhaps the real case against pornography is that it is *ersatz*: like taking saccharine in coffee—or that it can never produce assault and battery. But I would suggest that the mass-media cannot fairly be blamed for delinquency until something more is known about the way people react to their reading and viewing.¹

Far more serious than any incitement to violence is what Dr. Leavis (in 1930!) has called 'that deliberate exploitation of the cheap response which characterizes our civilization'.² The world which the controllers of the mass-media present to their audiences is not necessarily or even frequently evil, but it does usually consist of a Lowest Common Multiple rather than of a Highest Common Factor. Much of the output of cinema, Press and television is intellectually enervating and morally void. Those who plan the programmes are admittedly out to make money, and there is little reason to believe that they are restrained by anything other than the fear of possible complications if they go too far. Even the B.B.C. can stoop to putting on a thoroughly objectionable programme like *This is Your Life* which draws its audience by a nauseating display of its victim's inner emotions. The introduction of commercial television may be responsible for the corporation's abandonment of what it used to claim were its standards, but that does not make the thing any better.

As for the newspapers, they are now far away from their original objective of letting their readers know what was going on in the world around them or of expressing opinions sincerely held by their editorial staff. Here Mr. Hoggart has a very relevant comment:

'When I was a boy the older generation of working-class people used often to say, as evidence of the truth of some fact, "Oh, but it was in the papers." That phrase seems to me now almost entirely unused. One goes on reading the papers, even the political parts, so

¹ I believe that one view suggested by recent investigations is that they hardly react at all. Which is both reassuring and depressing.

² *Mass Civilization and Minority Culture*, p. 11. Let me say once again that practically all the valid points in the New Left's view of English culture represent a politicizing of things Dr. Leavis was saying thirty years ago. And they were said then with far more subtlety and intelligence. This debt has not been acknowledged, but it is worth pointing out its size.

long as they are made human and personal. At the back of the mind, in matters inviting any form of genuine belief, there sounds an echo from a bottomless unbelief.¹

And the reaction is what might be expected: 'It's all lies in the papers.' 'It's all propaganda in the papers.'

This situation is part of the moral consequences of Lord Northcliffe, but, speaking as a journalist myself, I find it impossible to contemplate without feeling both anger and shame. Anger because this destruction of a real Press, this insult to the intelligence of real readers, add up to a betrayal. And shame because what is said to be a profession is so lacking in professional standards, so bemused by its own complacent *mystique* that it fails to do anything about putting its house in order. At the moment the English national daily Press consists of *The Times*, which is a characteristic institution with very different merits and defects from other newspapers, the *Guardian*, which does us all credit morally, if not invariably technically, and the *Daily Telegraph*, which presents its news on a decent level with a recognizable bias to the right on political issues. On Sundays there are three 'quality' newspapers, only one of which makes much attempt to do the job of a daily, the other two trusting to their magazine features to win a circulation and advertising war that appears to be imminent. As for the rest of the national dailies and Sundays, for the moment (and despite a praiseworthy effort to raise the level of the *Daily Herald*) they are part of the entertainment industry. Instead of news there is 'human interest' (which would be better called 'inhuman interest'!). Instead of opinion based on conviction there is a spurious moral indignation, which often participates in precisely those things which it claims to condemn.² And, behind the newsprint, there is frequently the invasion of privacy, the hounding of individuals at tragic moments in their lives, the distortion of words uttered by the innocent and naive.³ The 'popular'

¹ *The Uses of Literacy* (Pelican ed., Penguin Books, 1958), p. 229.

² Anyone who is interested in moral tone should note how 'popular' journalists often become unable to write without a hypocritical ambivalence even when there is no necessity to do so. Their prose loses the possibility of conveying sincere emotion.

³ The death of the late Gilbert Harding illustrates conveniently what kind of fare is offered by the mass-media to their audiences. Just before he died he was seen by television viewers to break down during an interview and say that he wished he were dead. After his death certain newspapers took the occasion to discuss his private life under the usual cloak of quoted rumour and denial. I leave it to my readers to find their own words for what they think of these incidents.

Press, of course, constantly asserts that it fulfills a salutary function by the exposure of abuses which could not be revealed to a wide public were they not mingled with a certain amount of sensationalism and scandal to make the mixture palatable. But it is certain that there is more ambiguity in their attitude than they would admit. One has only to ask oneself whether the *Daily Mirror's* support of the Labour Party is weakened or strengthened by its particular brand of journalism. And the answer is not in doubt: were the ideals of British Socialism ever to be put into complete effect, the 'popular' Press might reasonably be expected to fade away, and, though we may, therefore, admire the disinterestedness of the *Mirror's* political line, there remains an obvious conflict between the advocacy of democratic values and their presentation in a way that betrays so low an opinion of what the average man can be expected to digest. And the *Daily Mirror* is in many ways the best of the 'popular' papers, occasionally producing an article or leader which is a real reflection of the inchoate opinions and desires of the English man-in-the-street. It is the formula which is false.

As to the exposure of abuses, it might be asked what great abuses have been exposed by the 'popular' Press over the last ten years, and I am afraid that the question would be a difficult one to answer. The law of libel puts a most effective stopper on that crusading for cleaner local government which forms so staple a food of American papers, but it does not do much to prevent the persecution of anyone whom an editor or a proprietor may care to persecute—always with the best legal advice.¹ The coverage of foreign news in the 'popular' Press is lamentable, the space given to topics such as education, trade union affairs or science not much greater, while any starlet can be sure that her doings will attract more attention than they warrant. In fact, when it comes to closing down newspapers I sometimes wonder what all the fuss is about. Most of them have long ceased to be anything but an industry (and are frequently described as such at board-meetings), and nobody would expect an unprofitable industry to be kept running. What wanted doing about Fleet Street should have been done years ago and by journalists

¹ The editor of a small local paper cannot afford to take the financial risk involved in comment on Councillor X's acquisition of land scheduled for development or Councillor Y's exertion of undue influence in the allocation of council houses. Even if he is sure of his facts, the present state of the law of libel makes the result of any suit too uncertain. A crusader would soon go out of business.

themselves: the taking of active steps to establish and enforce decent standards of professional behaviour. But the journalists have done nothing—the Press Council excites the derision it deserves—and when a chill wind blows from the managerial side it is difficult to feel that any bastions are being stormed which had not been surrendered long ago. The garrisons have marched out with their bonuses flying.¹

It must be admitted, therefore, that there is a great deal of truth in the charges of degradation and demoralization which are sometimes brought against the 'popular' Press. If, in fact, nobody is demoralized or degraded it is because people are mentally a good deal tougher than is sometimes thought. One of the more cheering features of contemporary England is the way in which the advice of the Press is fairly generally ignored on political issues, the substratum of sturdy disbelief noted by Mr. Hoggart. But this hardly absolves those who lower standards for profit or, more frequently in the case of the individual journalist, because they have only a vague idea that standards exist. If a man is given to firing pistols in the street it is desirable that he should be dissuaded from doing so even though he may not have hit anyone. What is remarkable and pitiable in Fleet Street is its increasing abandonment of the very attempt to influence opinion, its descent into melodrama or clowning.

THE CONTROL OF MASS-MEDIA

The mass-media do, I think, stand condemned by much of the matter they purvey. Usually their controllers do not make even the minimum effort required to appeal to the strength of their audience rather than to its weakness. I have spoken of the Press, since it is the mass-medium I know best, but the condemnation which the 'popular' Press deserves could also be directed against many television programmes, as well as certain types of book and film. On the other hand, it would be unfair to adopt the theory which blames the mass-media for the decline in English

¹ When it was recommended by a committee that criminal cases going to a superior court should not be reported in the Press at the magistrates' court level to avoid possible prejudice to a future jury the main comment of the National Union of Journalists was that this might put some court reporters out of work. The union's concern for its members is understandable, but, to say the least, there were other points which might have been considered in relation to that particular issue. If the N.U.J. wishes to be taken seriously then it must behave with some regard for the wider consequences of the practice of journalism.

regional and working-class culture. As has already been argued, in so far as these are not simply the product of a romantic view of the past, they were bound to be destroyed by universal education and the development of communications as well as by the necessity in a modern industrial civilization for a high degree of mobility of labour. The mass-media are, in fact, a symptom of the process which has abolished an older England rather than a cause of it.

Similarly, the idea that television and the films are preventing people from spending their leisure in some more creative way is also based on too rosy a view of what went on before the advent of the latest phase of modern industrial development. The original industrial revolution which, amongst other achievements, made television possible, also uprooted the English masses from their old rural, communal life and destroyed their folk culture. Remnants of this latter lingered on throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth (especially in isolated communities such as mining villages), but in general the English working classes became increasingly *déracinés* and had little possibility of using their leisure in any creative way. It may be that a number of working men went to the Mechanics' Institute who are now lured away by the silver screen, but the majority did not. They went elsewhere—most frequently to the pub—and, as between what used to go on in London working-class districts on a Saturday night fifty years ago and what goes on now, it cannot be said that the advantage is necessarily with a time that knew no television. Indeed, it could be claimed that the mass-media have damaged upper middle-class culture more than they have harmed the working classes' use of leisure. It is, after all, in Surbiton and Purley that the television aerial is ubiquitous. However, even in this class of society and in the eighteenth century Shakespeare was accompanied by the musical glasses. So he is today, but the music is different.

The third main charge against the mass-media, the immorality and importunity of the advertisements which make them go round, depends for its justification on economic rather than on cultural considerations. If the existence of a large and expanding market is essential to the modern industry of mass production (as it certainly is), then obviously anything which keeps that market in existence by drawing the attention of the consumer to the product in question is a good thing. As a political scientist not especially given to sympathy with a society of mass consumption has written:

'Being thus connected with the standard of living, with which it has a relationship of interdependence, advertising must be considered as an instrument of economic and commercial progress. It is not necessarily a factor of artistic progress. . . . But, socially, its role is not harmful—quite the contrary.'¹

The apparatus of modern publicity is one of the numerous consequences of the development of industrial mass production, and to attack it in isolation from the process of which it is a symptom is to take a superficial view of its significance. The importance which a number of intellectuals and journalists have attached to it is another example of a tendency to be diverted by irritating detail.

In Britain, moreover, the heads of industry, no less than the heads of trade unions, have been conditioned by the depression when customers were limited in number, and it is too much not to expect them to fight for their share of an expanded market with all the weapons at their disposal. There is nothing particularly immoral about this: they owe it to their workmen as much as to their shareholders. And the idea that it is wrong for manufacturers to compete in sales at home because there are people short of essentials in other parts of the world is admirable considered as a gesture, but only as that. It is not so much home consumption which holds up aid to underdeveloped countries as the balance of payments difficulty. To cope with that it is necessary to export (and, incidentally, to advertise one's exports), and to export competitively it is necessary to have a large home market (this is not to deny that it can be too large, but the difference is one of emphasis). Moreover, while advertising may put something on to the product's price, that is part of the presentation—like packaging or display—and, in any case, it would be quite impossible to envisage a kind of self-denying ordinance by which all manufacturers agreed not to advertise. Such an arrangement would never last for a moment.

A large home market and a large export market (both of them incited by advertising) are the conditions of keeping British industry going, both by widening its scope and by offering the bait of higher living standards to those working in it. This may be selfish, but then so are human beings. All that democratic states can do is to adapt themselves to the nature of their citizens—capable, no doubt, of sudden acts of generosity,

¹ André Siegfried, *Aspects du XXème Siècle* (Paris, 1955), p. 62.

but liable to flag in their exertions if they cannot improve their own immediate lot by their work. You may as an individual moralist preach the virtues of austerity and abstention (which are real), but you must not expect to be obeyed by the majority of men without coercion from the state. And states do not coerce their citizens unless they stand to gain by it as a power in the world's affairs. The dragon publicity is the reflection of a consumer society, which benefits the British state and the majority of Englishmen and with which the latter are perfectly contented, and it is not likely to be slain by any St. George in our time.

It might be better if reformers concentrated on improving advertising instead of agitating for its abolition or subjection to a tax which would simply be an added tax on industry. The two things that are glaringly wrong with it at the moment are that it is frequently very inaccurate or simply uninformative and that it is also often offensive aesthetically. A poster in an Underground station announcing a film at the local cinema is actively useful, since it would be impossible to discover what is on without it and its complements in the Press. But slogans about toothpaste winked at toothpaste users in lights of surprising ugliness, or howled at them over the television sound system at the wrong moment, often produce an effect of misinformation similar to that of being told of a film playing at a non-existent cinema. Nobody expects advertisers to point out the snags in their own product, but they can at least provide *some* real and relevant information about it. To deceive consumers is irritating for them and immoral and foolish on the part of the deceivers—foolish because such tactics certainly attract their own penalty.¹ Yet it ought not to be beyond the wit of man to effect an improvement in advertising standards. It should be possible to devise a code both as to veracity and sightliness, which could be enforced by law, and this is a task to which attention could reasonably be given, but which is only of marginal cultural interest.

There is also some misunderstanding behind the statement that the increasing concentration of the instruments of mass persuasion in the hands of a few men is a dangerous phenomenon. Dangerous it may be—past experience of press lords seems to indicate that megalomania is one of

¹ As regards the morality of advertising, it is difficult not to agree with André Siegfried that it is 'moral to the same degree to which public speech is moral'. *Op. cit.*, p. 81. And, like the public speech of a politician or lawyer, its success will depend on its maintaining a relationship to truth which is not one of identity, but can hardly be one of dissociation either.

the occupational risks of the profession—but not in the way that is usually claimed. An owner of mass-media is not a Goebbels; a William Randolph Hearst is about as far as he goes—which, God knows, is far enough. In other words, it is his lack of belief and unoriginality of mind in the field of general ideas—that same unoriginality which puts him in touch with his audience—which prevent him from threatening society by unscrupulous propaganda. If Kings were philosophers, then the power they wield might be put to really harmful use. As it is, the *Daily Mirror* roars the language of the right wing of the Labour Party (which it calls ‘the people’), a language far more respectable than that employed by its competitors, but quite as unexciting. The end result of a concentration of the means of mass communication in a small number of hands is more likely to be a decline in quality, a lessening of the consumer’s choice and, ultimately, the closing of newspapers, cinemas and television studios the minute they become unprofitable than any deliberate sapping of the national mind with a view to replacing it by some more subservient organ. Those who provide the diet of newsprint and celluloid, of viewing and listening, for so many millions of people are less pernicious and, above all, less potent than is commonly thought by their critics.

These brief reflections on the part played by the mass-media in our cultural life seem to me to lead to the conclusion that what harm they do consists in the enervation, rather than the corruption, of the national mind. It is certain that, though one may agree with Hannah Arendt that entertainment pure and simple cannot be condemned for failing to establish ‘values’, yet the devotion of television, wireless and newspapers to it does make less demand on the audience than would be justified even from the point of view of maximum entertainment effect.¹ Much of the stuff purveyed by the mass-media is not good of its kind, having all the

¹ ‘The truth is we all stand in need of entertainment and amusement in some form or other, because we are all subject to life’s great cycle, and it is sheer hypocrisy or social snobbery to deny that we can be amused and entertained by exactly the same things which amuse and entertain the masses of our fellow men.’ *Between Past and Future* (Faber, 1961, p. 206). One can agree with this, while still believing some forms of entertainment and amusement to be better than others and finding the separation here implied from other forms of mental activity a little artificial. On the other hand, I find the insistence in the same essay on the dangers of popularization through the mass-media of ‘cultural objects’ exaggerated. To say that the danger is that ‘the life process of society . . . will literally consume the cultural objects, eat them up and destroy them’ (loc. cit., p. 207) is to be carried away by an image. My feeling is that, if *Hamlet* can survive Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare*, it can survive anything.

sogginess and sentimentality of the British 'B' film. In this connection it is significant that there is evidence of a steep drop in the use of television by school-children between the ages of fourteen and sixteen—a drop which may partly be caused by increased activities outside the home but which could also be motivated by boredom with the material presented.¹ To be subjected to a perpetual stream of light programme is not particularly good for anyone, but it is not particularly amusing either. The one field where television has genuinely raised standards is that of news and comment on news. Here the careful impartiality and the relatively adult presentation are streets ahead of what is printed in the 'popular' Press and, one might suppose, will one day force the latter to reform itself. And the reason for this exception is a simple one: programmes with political implications provide the one area where the commercial companies and also the B.B.C. feel themselves vulnerable to parliamentary pressure. Sensationalism or falsification would soon lead to political intervention. Hence the fact that, while television news programmes are nowhere near as good as a really serious newspaper, they are much better than what is produced by any other kind. Governmental and parliamentary control, however, does not and cannot extend to matters of taste, nor can it create vitality where none exists.

Supposing it to be admitted that the influence of the mass-media may be for the worse a difficult question is posed: what is to be done about it? Institute a censorship? But the very same intellectuals who denounce the effect of television and horror comics followed one another into the witness-box to testify to their detestation of any form of censorship in the case of Lady Chatterley. Give back to the B.B.C. its monopoly of television? But the B.B.C. is said to have sold itself to the principalities and powers of English life, and is denounced for being 'stuffy' and 'priggish'. The fact is that those whom we have seen attacking the remnants of Puritan feeling when it manifests itself in a restrictive attitude towards culture are involved in a paradox. The freedom which they claim

¹ Cf. *The Leisure Activities of School Children: a Report of an Investigation* by Mary Stewart and the students of a Holborn Advanced Tutorial Class (London, 1958). The figures given in this W.E.A. pamphlet show that, of children with television in their homes, the average number of viewing nights per week diminishes between the ages of fourteen and sixteen and over as follows: grammar-school boys: 5.0 to 3.8; grammar-school girls: 4.9 to 3.4; secondary-modern boys: 5.2 to 3.3; secondary-modern girls: 4.7 to 3.4.

for the work of art and the artist will also be used by the mass-media—principally the freedom to be devastatingly silly—and this they can prevent only by recourse to new restrictions. Attacking the Puritan Philistine, they find themselves face to face with the commercial Philistine from whom they can escape only by developing the principles of a new political Puritanism. And experience suggests that the remedy is unlikely to be much better than the disease. Commercial Philistines have their disadvantages, but at least they do not enact legislation.

Moreover, supposing that it were decided to institute some kind of machinery to control the output of the mass-media, in the name of what principles could it be operated? The creation of any such censorship takes for granted an ethical unanimity which simply does not exist in present-day English society. It is true that there might well be a ban on various techniques (such as subliminal advertising) which are intended to attack the subconscious mind—a measure recently advocated by Aldous Huxley—but any measure going beyond this would raise the question of what we actually want the mass-media to do, and on this there could be no agreement. Of course, many of those who propose such control either directly or by implication have a very definite idea of how they would wish it to be operated: in accordance with their own theories of social good. After the Puritan Philistine and the commercial Philistine we should then have the reign of the ideological Philistine, which is to be seen in a perfected form in the Soviet Union. And if anyone is prepared to contemplate this eventuality he might think for a moment of the kind of person who would be found on the committee of, say, an English Writers' Union. Control of 'popular' culture can be carried out only as a consequence of a strong set of beliefs, which will also affect literature, art and probably science as well, since the believer will not draw distinctions of artistic or intellectual quality but will heed only the content, while usually oversimplifying and misunderstanding it. What begins with the condemnation of seaside picture postcards is likely to end with the condemnation of *Ulysses*, since in practice it is hard to find a legal criterion by which to distinguish between them. Not only would those concerned with the operation of such a control not know when to stop, but it is very unlikely that they would even want to stop. Theirs would be the frame of mind that lumps Nietzsche with the Nazis and objects to *Dr. Zhivago* just because its 'message' is conveyed with subtlety, power and distinction. This is the intolerance that led Claudel to deny Gide's

talent and keeps Joyce from being published in his native country. A national ideology can be said to have some advantages, but it is in the cultural field that they are least obvious, and to desire a consensus of belief that does not exist is, in any case, either quite useless or a potential threat to freedom of thought and speech.¹

UNIFIED CULTURE

This argument as to the undesirability of the ideological control of the mass-media is also relevant to the third item in the cultural programme of the New Left: the necessity of what is called a 'unified culture' or a 'common culture'. For any culture (taken in the widest sense of the word) to be genuinely 'unified' it must be informed by a structure of beliefs rigorously held in common. Indeed, inasmuch as this aspiration towards a 'unified culture' is not simply an attack on educational inequality, it seems to be a hangover from the anthropological use of the word culture. Primitive tribes often do have a culture unified and integrated by a strongly held series of myths and taboos. However, at quite an early stage there is a differentiation of function and also of hierarchy. From a state in which everyone indifferently tells stories or hunts game or makes arrows we pass to a state where these employments are specialized and are considered as of different degrees of value. A society in which everyone shares the same cultural experience is the exception rather than the rule even among primitive peoples, and the range of that experience tends to become wider as the society develops. Even in a social system as unified as that of the Middle Ages by the thirteenth century Dante had considerably less in common with an Italian serf than, say, Montezuma would have had with the average Aztec, and ever since then Europe has been divided with increasing clarity into a cultural élite and

¹ Contrary to what is usually thought, such total systems of belief are at something of a disadvantage in many parts of the world we live in. Modern civilization is so imbued with Western rationalism and a tradition of discussion that unifying total belief can be felt only as a mutilation. In our awe before Communism we often forget that, as compared with Christianity or Islam, it has had little success in imposing its system of ideas. Now after a hundred years they have already lost their force, though they may well have their maximum theological effect in countries such as China which do not share the Cartesian tradition. If anyone wishes to produce the absolutely stable totalitarian society of *Brave New World* he will have to use the genetic and psychological methods of conditioning which Mr. Huxley has described.

the rest (the moment at which this became most strikingly apparent we call the Renaissance). Civilization has always been marked by cultural diversity and differentiation of function—what we call progress has been in that sense—and it is only the unspoken assumption that unity is the normal state of culture that could lead anyone to imagine that it would be a good thing were there to be less variety and more ‘common culture’ than there is today. No system that one can think of would make of an artificially ‘unified culture’ anything but the enslavement of a creative minority to forces which would inevitably express themselves in bureaucracy. Ikhnaton would be subject to the priests.

Advocacy of a ‘unified culture’ is usually associated with the claim that only thus can the horizontal cleavage which is supposed to exist between the tastes of the various classes of English society be reduced or eliminated. No doubt such a cleavage is an unfortunate phenomenon, but it cannot be said that England is unique in this respect or that our social differences are greater than those which separate a highly educated Frenchman from a Parisian worker (for instance, there is the vast difference between working-class French and that spoken by an extremely literate upper class). Moreover, the gap is being lessened by the mass-media themselves which are producing a ‘unified culture’ of a sort and, incidentally, proving that the thing cannot be regarded as an unmixed blessing even by its warmest partisans. Culturally England is being divided into intellectuals and the rest. What we are seeing is the equalization of everything below a rather high cultural level, and this process does not reflect class differences in the usual sense, since, though intellectuals generally live like the professional middle classes, they cannot be entirely identified with them. And once the term ‘common culture’ is seen to refer to the relationship between the intellectuals and the ‘rest’ (whether upper class, middle class or working class), then it becomes quite clear how dangerous and deceptive an ideal it is.

It is on this question of the relationship between intellectuals and the ‘rest’—a problem which includes that of the intellectual’s role in society—that a final criticism of the cultural theories which I have been discussing must rest. In his play *Roots* Mr. Wesker has given an account of that relationship, which has been widely praised and which is revealing as to the conceptions of the intellectual’s status that are still current among the English left. The intellectual in *Roots* is Ronnie Kahn who, as the play opens, is engaged to Beatie Bryant, the daughter of a family of Norfolk

farm-workers. To her he has endeavoured to communicate his passions and his ideas from a knowledge of poetry to the habit of making love in the afternoon. Throughout the play we see her alternately boring and shocking her bucolic family by trying to pass on some of Ronnie's *ipsissima verba*. At the end of the play, just when he is due to arrive, Ronnie sends a letter breaking off the engagement and in the shock of disappointment Beatie finds herself uttering her own feelings for once instead of words put into her mouth by Ronnie. The play closes with her cry: 'God in heaven, RONNIE! It does work, it's happening to me, I can feel it's happened, I'm beginning, on my own two feet—I'm beginning . . .'¹

This plot seems to imply several statements about the activities of intellectuals. Ronnie, it must be said, is not a terribly good intellectual. Most of the things he is represented as saying here and in the two other plays of Mr. Wesker's trilogy are the commonplaces of a vague populism, which makes up in moral fervour what it lacks in precise objectives. However, the most significant thing about him is that he should feel himself entitled, even compelled, to 'go to the people' with a message. His attitude towards Beatie has certainly been all too 'dominative'—to use a word much in disfavour with Mr. Williams and his followers—and the final moral of the play revolves around Mr. Wesker's determination not to let him get away with it. Ronnie's letter to Beatie breaking it off emphasizes masochistically the weakness and neurosis of intellectuals ('most of us intellectuals are pretty sick and neurotic . . . and we couldn't build a world even if we were given the reins of government . . .'), although the final *dénouement* of the play might be thought to show that he had done her some good after all. In fact, Mr. Wesker's view of the relationship of Ronnie to Beatie lands him in a difficulty. While approving of Ronnie's concern for carrying culture to others, he nevertheless seems to have realized the priggish side of such didacticism. Ronnie must, therefore, let Beatie down so that the weakness of the intellectual can be shown up and she can come out from under his influence shocked into articulation by her disappointment. The advantage of this pattern is that it allows its creator to eat his cake and have it. Ronnie is both ineffective and effective. Beatie is both uninfluenced and influenced. The intellectual's guilt complex, which played so large a part in the movement of the thirties, has been systematized here into a theory of cultural transmission,

¹ *Roots* (Penguin ed., 1959), p. 77.

a resemblance which is partly concealed by Mr. Wesker's more realistic picture of the working classes.¹

The fallacy in the theory of the relationship of the intellectual to society which can be gathered from *Roots* seems to consist in simultaneously exaggerating and diminishing his role. It is not the primary duty of an intellectual to go round as a kind of cultural missionary bent on converting the heathen. His primary duty is to improve the quality of his thought, and, if he is a creative artist, of his works. And if he takes any other view of his task in life he will not have anything worth saying to communicate—this, incidentally, seems to be the case with Ronnie Kahn. It is, in fact, the business of an intellectual to be a 'good' intellectual and only then to worry about his relationship with a possible audience. The first objective of the utterance of thought must always be to make it clearer to the thinker himself, and any theory of cultural transmission which places the emphasis on intellectual hot-gossiping will diminish both the status of the creative intelligence and the content of what it has to convey. However, once a thinker has arrived at a conclusion he ought not to be deterred from expressing it by any fear of displaying 'dominative' cultural attitudes. It is his duty to dominate, to say what he has to say and get it heard, to find some to listen now and many in the time to come. Guilt is as bad a motive for abandoning the necessary arrogance of the intellect as it is for wishing to change other people's lives. It would be easier to respect Ronnie Kahn if he had the courage of his didactic convictions. As it is, *Roots* seems to me to shirk the real problems involved in the relationship between an intellectual and 'the rest'. If the former is to produce an effect on the society in which he lives he must worry more about what he has to say than about whether he has the right to speak.

Mr. Wesker's play, in fact, typifies the dilemma which faces all those who adopt the cultural theories of the New Left, which I have been

¹ Mr. Wesker's new play, *Chips with Everything*, deals with the same problem of cultural transmission—only in this case there is no Beatie to start talking for herself at the final curtain, and realism about the possibilities inherent in the British working classes has changed to pessimism. This was probably an inevitable evolution, since Mr. Wesker seems always to have thought too much of them in one way and too little in another. He has an urge to improve them, but is unable to respect their own values—which are inarticulate and can be affected by cheap sentiment and false glamour, but are values for all that. He can neither like the English worker nor let him alone. And this dilemma is far more banal than the admirers of his plays would have us think. It is, in fact, the typical intellectual's dilemma.

discussing. To lead or not to lead? To teach or not to teach? These questions are not usually put directly, but the attempts to avoid them are revealing, leading, amongst other things, to that confusion between *culture* and *a culture* which is so useful to anyone who wishes to disguise the fact that culture is made by small creative minorities. Yet, a consideration of culture which places the emphasis on anything other than creation is false and also dangerous. For the majority of men will shackle the forces of change if they can, and if the marching wing of humanity has privileges (among others the ability to exist without the approval of society) it is because they need them for the work they have to do: the austere and ungrateful task of producing ideas that are unwelcome to their contemporaries but find an echo in the future. Here we return to the quotation from Goethe with which this chapter opened, to the idea of gradual self-perfection, of the preservation within oneself of an inheritance which is implicit in the Latin root of the word 'culture'.

Holding this view of the nature of culture, I cannot accept the theories which have been expressed with such sincerity by Mr. Williams. Even in the form in which he has put them forward they imply a culture controlled by bureaucracy and unified by ideology. And these remedies seem to me worse than the evils they are intended to cure. In a civilization which has gone as far as ours towards differentiation and variety the constraint of an orthodoxy would be felt as tyrannical by the first-class mind or, worse still, welcomed as a drug by the second-rate, while the control of the mass-media carried out in its name would lead to the results we have seen elsewhere. I do not say that Mr. Williams or even the writers in *New Left Review* necessarily wish to bring about censorship or impose a uniform ideology on their fellow countrymen, but I would claim that their cultural theories can never be put into practice unless they are willing to adopt some such measures as these. That being so, either those theories are mere speculation or else they represent the possibility of something undesirable, which is clearly discernible though unperceived by the theorists. Putting the argument at its simplest, they can be rejected in the old-fashioned name of liberty or whatever that quality is which enables the mind to avoid the potentially stifling pressures of the world around it.¹

¹ These criticisms of the New Left largely repeat those I made in an essay called 'Philistine to Philistine?' which appeared in *International Literary Annual*, No. 2, edited by John Wain (Calder, 1959). Since then I have been glad to see some support

CULTURE AS CREATION

However, disbelief in the possibility or desirability of a culture 'unified' by the pressure of a series of beliefs held in common and scepticism as to whether the evils engendered by the mass-media warrant draconian restrictions do not exempt anyone from the duty of suggesting remedies for the malaise which hangs over our cultural life at the present time. In fact, as has been suggested, things are not so bad as they are said to be, but that does not mean that no improvements can be made. But these reforms should be by their nature of such a kind as to ensure the offering of the widest possible cultural variety in the hope (or in the faith) that the choice would be a right one. It is not by closing the access to horror comics that we should arrive at a solution for whatever problem they represent. It is by making people no longer wish to read them. It is not by discouraging 'pop' music that we shall encourage the taste for classical, nor by censoring gangster films that we shall increase the audience for Shakespeare (if the Elizabethans had censored the tragedy of blood we should have had no *Hamlet*). The trouble with the theories about culture, which I have been discussing, is that their emphasis has been far too much upon complaint and their remedies restrictive. All too often there seems to be a desire to replace living things by dead, to silence a vital, if vulgar and commercialized, form of entertainment and replace it by the cloistered calm of the municipal museum in some small provincial town. Detailed suggestions for cultural improvement too often conjure up a picture of one of those terrible organizations by means of which national states purvey their wares in literature, art and science. There are pictures in some safe modern style on the wall, books well reviewed in the Sunday newspapers on the shelves and a 'great man of letters' speaking slowly on British institutions to an audience of earnest students and Anglophil old ladies. There is little that is living there. What live matter there is will come in a question at the end of the lecture or a conversation after it is over, though, since the lecturer will meet only local notables at the subsequent cocktail party, this latter spark is unlikely to be struck.¹

for my arguments from a different angle in Richard Wollheim's *Fabian Tract Socialism and Culture* (London, 1961). It is refreshing to find a professed Socialist quoting John Stuart Mill in order to refute the case for a 'common culture'.

¹ How unrewarding gatherings of intellectuals can be will be known to anyone who has taken part in them. Perhaps we need to know someone well—either

It would be too easy to point out all the defects in the organizational approach to culture. At the dead point where the official and the fashionable meet and blend (as they are bound to do) there is, so it seems to me, a bitter lesson to be drawn by those interested in improving cultural standards. Patronage (and especially state patronage) has always run the risk of making five derivative works of art bloom where one bloomed before, and anyone who wishes to study what consumption of talent and deviation of critical opinion fashion can cause should look at the history of the English theatre since the war. At a time when, say, Brecht is fashionable and any budding playwright writing Brechtian pastiche knows exactly in what papers he can safely expect a favourable notice it is fairly easy for anyone with subsidies to give to multiply the theatres at which such efforts can be seen. Whether this is worth doing can be a matter of dispute, but it is certain that what is difficult, and what will not, in fact, be done by official patronage any more than by straight commercialism, is to anticipate the next fashionable genre or winnow the rare grains of originality from the present one.

To 'do something' about cultural conditions in England demands a more sustained effort than is involved in the subsidies of the Arts Council and the creation of municipal theatres. It requires an infinity of individual actions upon the minds and emotions both of those whom I have called 'the creative minority' and of those who are not among their number. It requires, in short, that general and individual action which is usually described as education. If a mediating factor, a means of transmission is necessary between the intellectuals and the rest of society, then that is just the role that we expect of education in its widest sense. In this connection it will not so much be education directed towards a creative contribution to culture—for no educational system can be sure of producing the exceptional man; it can only enable him to do his work—as towards a realization that such a contribution must be made by someone if society is to survive, that that someone cannot be enlisted on the side of any project external to his purpose—it is he who will make the projects of fifty years hence—and that to produce the conditions under

personally or through his work—before he can speak to us in a manner we can understand. Then, indeed, conversation becomes exciting and significant—like a dialogue of one half of the mind with the other. The difference between this sort of thing and the ordinary boredom of cultural assemblies is something like that which we feel as between hearing just one more university lecturer and listening to a genuine teacher.

which he can survive is the one imperative duty on us all. Whether in literature, art, science, philosophy, commerce or politics, the original man is the one factor in our state we cannot do without. For that reason he deserves respect, and not only for that reason. It remains true that while only a minority can participate in those daemonic processes by which the total way of life of their fellows will be shaped and informed, yet there is a sense in which their achievement—and, above all, the manner of their achievement—must serve as the only goal and yardstick of humanity. Man, it is said, is a creator before he is anything else, and the thought should never be far from us in our discussion of culture that the individual act of creation personifies in exemplary form the myriad of small gains and satisfactions which, while they do not change the world, nevertheless represent life's advantage for the mass of men. Without the small effort, hardly apparent outside the personal sphere, man must lose his self-respect and with it his humanity.

*'Den schlechten Mann musz man verachten,
Der nie bedacht, was er vollbringt.
Das ist's ja, was den Menschen zieret,
Und dazu ward ihm der Verstand,
Dasz er im innern Herzen spüret,
Was er erschafft mit seiner Hand.*

'The incompetent man who never considers what he is doing deserves nothing but contempt. What makes a human being is just this, that he can feel in his inmost heart what he fashions with his hands, and that is what his wits were given him for.'¹

¹ Schiller, *Das Lied von der Glocke*, ll. 15-20. The translation is quoted from *The Penguin Book of German Verse* (Penguin Books, 1957), p. 261.

EDUCATION AND INTELLECT

Surely it is very intelligible to say, and that is what I say here, that liberal education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence.

J. H. NEWMAN

That topic all-absorbing, as it was,
Is now and ever shall be, to us—CLASS.

JOHN BETJEMAN

In putting forward the idea that education may be the only voluntary method of cultural transmission available to us, the only eventual bridge between the intellectuals and 'the rest', I am aware that I am saying something which is both ambiguous and probably highly unconvincing to the majority of people. And this for three reasons.

First, it may well be objected that whatever else education may be described as being it is certainly a part of the broader meaning of the word 'culture' and that therefore it cannot be separated from it and assigned a sort of priority; that it is a consequence as much as a cause of culture. But, while admitting this, it nevertheless remains true that, apart from the creation of art or music or thought or the exemplary attitudes of religious belief, education is the only means we have of affecting a country's culture. It is, so to speak, the facet of culture which is open to us, as social beings, for the exercise of our human wills. We must educate or abandon any systematic attempt to raise the level of our civilization.

The second objection springs from the first. Since intellectuals have been saying 'educate!' ever since the Renaissance—not to mention classical antiquity—to say it again sounds a depressing banality, and this is particularly true at a moment when, to English ears, the word has taken on the

connotation of what sometimes seem rather a dreary set of institutions. To say that one believes in education has come to have something of the same effect on an audience as to say that one believes in God: the reiteration of an embarrassingly outmoded nineteenth-century ideal. There is a shifting of feet, and the attention wanders. And this situation is hardly improved by the contrast between the writings of great educationalists of the past and the grey bureaucratic productions of the present day. Everything conspires to make the idea of education dull—not least, it seems, education departments in the universities. But this cannot be helped. If education no longer recalls any ideal that is all the more reason for an attempt to return to a state of things in which the word opened new worlds and new hopes to those who pronounced it with awe and yearning—that feeling which is now experienced by millions of Africans and Asians and which we, the heirs of European humanism, have forgotten. We must pronounce the word with belief because it alone can bring us what no violent upheaval and no purely material improvement can effect: a prospect of bettering and deepening our own personalities.

Thirdly, there is the ambiguity of the word itself. Education has been used at different times and different places of such widely opposed processes as the Socratic dialogue, the medieval disputation, attendance at a prince's court, going into the army, the *école normale supérieure* and the English secondary-modern school. The knowledge of how to behave in company or of how to command men can be the result of education, but it is clearly not education in quite the same sense as that which imparts a knowledge of physics or Latin and Greek. In one sense the whole of life is an education; in another education is received at schools and universities. Knowledge is said to be power, but it is not necessarily the power to know oneself—an aim which embraces the whole extension of the personality between birth and death.

Education, in fact, has a wider meaning, in which its object is the acquisition of wisdom, and a more limited meaning, in which its object is the acquisition of knowledge, and, though the latter aim may give a powerful impetus towards the former, yet they are not the same.¹ To

¹ The wider aim has been defined by Whitehead in *Science and the Modern World* (Cambridge University Press, 1926), p. 284: 'Wisdom is the fruit of a balanced development. It is this balanced growth of individuality which it should be the aim of education to secure.'

attain wisdom is a moral process; to attain knowledge an intellectual, and possibly also an aesthetic, one. And if, for the purposes of argument, we distinguish between the restrictive and the wider meanings of education it becomes clear that educational institutions must principally concern themselves with the discipline of the intellect in the hope that wisdom may follow it. To be at a school or a university is no substitute for the experience of life or rather it is simply a part (an influential part) of that experience, and the actual pedagogic instruction regarding social and ethical questions ('don't crib—don't hit boys smaller than yourself—play for your side') is likely to be less effective than the instruction received from other sources which would have been received, school or no school. This is not to question the necessity of such moral instruction in school or to deny that wisdom can be gained from experience received there or in the university, but it is to suggest that it can also be gathered elsewhere, above all from the family, whereas the knowledge and special skills acquired at school or university can be learned only there and therefore represent the one unique contribution which they, considered as institutions, have to offer.

However, there has been in all times and in all places a third sense attributed to the word 'education' beyond the acquisition of specific knowledge or the kind of universal wisdom suggested by the phrase 'know thyself'. This is the teaching of the beliefs common to or frequent in the society within which the school or university exists, whether those beliefs are properly of a religious (and, therefore, more universal) order or whether they are simply varieties of national ethos. Thus the American high school is said to have found its principal task in the creation of good Americans out of a heterogeneous mass of European immigrants and the British public school in the provision of officer-like material for the staffing of the British Empire.¹ In Soviet Russia a main purpose of schools and universities is to turn out good Communists, while all over the world Jesuit educational foundations are concerned to produce good Catholics—an aspiration in which they do not always succeed. And these examples will serve to suggest that in this sense education cannot

¹ Cf. a passage from *Our Public Schools*, by J. G. Cotton Minchin (Sonnenschein, 1901), quoted by John Douglas Pringle in a recent article 'The British Commune' (*Encounter*, no. 89, p. 28): 'Long before the British Public at large had been fired with a faith in the British Empire, one and indivisible, that was the faith in which every English public school boy was reared. . . .' (p. 44.)

be regarded as a good thing in itself in quite the same way as it can in the other two senses. Though such indoctrination with a particular *Weltanschauung* may benefit the society which is consolidated by it, an outsider's opinion of the operation will depend on his opinion of the society in question. National Socialist Germany's educational curriculum has presumably no defenders these days, and one would have to be a convinced Communist to approve of the hours of Marxism-Leninism to which Russian students are compelled to submit. In other words, while the teaching of knowledge and, possibly, the conveyance of wisdom are universally recognized as legitimate aims of education, the transmission of a distinct religious or nationalist set of beliefs will find as many varieties of opponent as there are varieties of belief. The utility of teaching physics is obvious; that of teaching theology less so to an agnostic; that of teaching a nationalist version of history less so still to anyone who does not happen to share it—it is, indeed, universally condemned as harmful and universally practised on the school level.¹ In fact, it is rather doubtful whether the use of schools and universities to indoctrinate the pupils with a creed, whether religious, nationalist or merely social, can genuinely be called education. This purpose often seems to involve shackling the minds of those under instruction rather than that liberation of them through knowledge and wisdom which should be desired. For it is the essence of such a liberation that any choice of belief should be a free choice with a full knowledge of the possible alternatives.²

Among the implications contained in the word 'education' it is, therefore, the intellectual and the social/ethical meanings which will play the larger part in schools and universities. The degree to which wisdom can be instilled into pupils at such institutions can hardly be measured and can certainly not be legislated for. Their distinctive contribution towards the acquisition of wisdom is an intellectual one, just as the virtues they encourage are, in the words of Bertrand Russell, those 'essential to the successful pursuit of knowledge; they may be called the

¹ An example from an unexpected quarter of the dangers which attend the perversion of history can be found in the account of the relations between England and Ireland taught in many Irish schools. In the opinion of good judges this was one of the principal factors in sending ignorant young men out to kill or be killed on the Ulster border.

² 'It is a bad thing for intelligence, and ultimately for character, to let instruction be influenced by moral considerations.' Bertrand Russell, *On Education* (Allen and Unwin, 1926), p. 190.

intellectual virtues'.¹ This is the 'intellectual excellence' which Cardinal Newman held to be the object of liberal education, and which implies the power of self-discipline as well as the ability to impose a form on the raw material of knowledge. Education conceived as the attainment of this excellence can be defended on utilitarian grounds, as I shall show in the course of this chapter, but, ultimately, it stands in no need of such defence. In itself it is an approach to wisdom, and that is enough. No doubt the elements of social conformity inculcated by an educational system can also work towards the same end, but it seems unlikely that the sum total of wisdom in the world will actually be increased by any such institutional ethic. It is a commodity in permanently short supply, and no way has yet been found of making it more plentiful.²

CONFLICTS

I have dealt at some length with what we mean when we speak of education because within the word are contained different purposes and procedures which may be found to conflict with one another. Such a conflict has already become all too evident in America, and it is because I believe it to be present in this country as well that I draw attention to it here. In a recent book Professor Brogan has pointed out the damage done to the intellectual standards of American education by the dominance of social and political ideals in the school system, and, in so doing, he is echoing constant criticism on the part of Americans themselves. The story is well known. For the absorption of immigration from the old world the American school was the most convenient as well as the most powerful instrument. There the sons of new Americans learned the ideals which held their country together. There they entered into the melting-pot of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

² Mr. Williams in *The Long Revolution* (Chatto and Windus, 1961) fails to consider the possibility of conveying any element of wisdom during the processes of formal education. For him 'a child must be taught, first, the accepted behaviour and values of his society, second, the general knowledge and attitudes appropriate to an educated man, and, third, a particular skill by which he will earn his living and contribute to the welfare of his society' (pp. 126-7). Both his second and third categories seem to me to come under the heading 'knowledge', though some wisdom might possibly be distilled from the second. Nor do I much care for the order in which he places these educational tasks, since he puts first what I take to be the most dubious of them—both because the values of society can be very questionable and because such social adaptation is really the business of the family.

nationalities and creeds which America had become. But for that melting-pot to work efficiently all young Americans had to be subjected to its moulding influence. And that meant, in Professor Brogan's words:

'not so much the lowering as the abandonment of standards . . . studies had to be found that these pupils could master and possibly use later, which was all right. But these were deemed to be equal with studies that a smaller group could master and use. Typing was as good as trig. This was a practical and tolerable solution a generation ago, a necessary acceptance of facts about American life. But the American school system is no longer concerned with American life, but just with life . . . and death.'¹

The disastrous effects of insufficient emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge began to become apparent from the moment when the U.S.A. found itself in direct competition with another nation as to who could produce the best brains in the quickest time. Here is one instance where the inculcation in the schools of a society's beliefs has conflicted with the intellectual purposes of education to an extent which is proving harmful to that society itself. Moreover, it was not so much that the beliefs were bad in themselves as that they were inapplicable to the process of education, and had been extended to it only by a false analogy with the political idea of democracy. As Professor Brogan puts it, 'To insist, nevertheless, that if a high school has got to choose it had better choose math or Latin is to be undemocratic. It is to insist that some things are superior to others and, in turn, that fewer people can master these than can master the techniques of mechanical living.'² As we saw in the discussion of the relationship between the creative individual and society, the political ideal of democracy cannot simply be transferred into the cultural sphere. To do so is to ruin culture and make democracy ridiculous.³

¹ D. W. Brogan, *America in the Modern World* (Hamish Hamilton, 1960), p. 74.

² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

³ Cf. also Hannah Arendt's criticism of some basic fallacies underlying the American educational system (Arendt, *op. cit.*, *The Crisis in Education*, pp. 180-3). The assumption that a teacher does not need to know anything apart from how to teach ('a teacher . . . is a man who can simply teach anything . . .') is especially significant in this connection.

'SOCIAL' VERSUS 'INTELLECTUAL'

The relevance for English education today of this sacrifice of intellectual attainment to social convenience is easily recognizable. For the whole of our educational system is at present wavering between the social and the intellectual conception of the work it has to do, and, in the course of the debate, what might be called reforming opinion seems to be more and more on the side of the school as a social assembly line and less and less concerned with it as an instrument for the teaching of knowledge.¹

There are many signs of this tendency. One of them is the greater interest aroused by 'difficult' children—sometimes to the detriment of the undelinquent boys and girls in the same school. Another is the increasing demands made on the teacher, who is expected to play the part of anything between a waiter and a social worker—anything, in fact, except what his task of teaching would imply. The debate between the grammar school and the comprehensive school is also conducted in terms which put the one in the position of sustaining the intellectual function of the school and make of the other a partisan of its social task. There is, of course, no compelling reason why a comprehensive school should not have as high a scholastic standard in its top forms as a grammar school, but, in fact, the arguments put forward by its supporters are all concerned with its advantages as a social institution (increased flexibility for late-developing children, lack of social distinction as between more and less clever pupils, etc.).² To read public utterances on the English

¹ As the Crowther Report puts it, 'The teenagers with whom we are concerned need, perhaps before all else, to find a faith to live by. They will not all find the same faith and some will not find any. Education can and should play some part in their search.' (15 to 18. A Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England), Vol. 1 (London, 1959), p. 44.) Well, yes. But such aspirations are hardly much guide as to what to do with existing educational institutions. The distinction made later in the report (pp. 59–60) between education 'regarded as a social service' and education regarded as 'an investment in national efficiency' seems to take it for granted that these two aims can be pursued *pari passu* without any conflict between them, but, of course, there is no assurance that this is necessarily so. It depends on circumstance and on resources. And the idea of the pursuit of knowledge being considered purely as 'an investment in national efficiency' is highly objectionable.

² The Crowther Report regards one function of the comprehensive school as the avoidance of educational waste, but is considerably more enthusiastic over its social task. 'When a comprehensive school really commands the loyalty and affection of its members it acts as an effective sign of that unity in society which our age covets.' (Ibid., p. 418.) But does our age covet anything of the sort? And is it the business of a

school by magistrates, welfare workers and politicians one would often think that its sole purpose was to keep off the streets children and adolescents who might otherwise go to the bad. Obviously, this is a perfectly legitimate purpose, but it is not education.¹

The same confusion is also apparent at university level. The idea that everyone has a right to go to a university if they want to, and can reach a minimal standard of competence, is one which stems partly from such vaguely ethical considerations as the desire for a 'fuller life' and partly from a feeling that technical education is the great necessity these days and that you cannot have too much of a good thing. That is, it is sustained by two of the most powerful of twentieth-century battle-cries: the humanitarian and the technological. Both these emotions (and they are emotions) have their justification, but, whatever theoretical criticisms can be made of them (to say someone has a 'right' to higher education is a little like saying he has a 'right' to become a poet or a concert pianist), it can hardly fail to be the case that the increase in numbers of students, which they are likely to bring about, may produce some of those effects which Professor Brogan deplures in American education.²

Consider, for instance, the case of the state-aided student who at the end of his three years is unable to reach the standard required for a pass

school to act as a symbol of it? This is suspiciously like Victorian 'character-building' adapted to the platitudes of a new era.

¹ A practical example. I have been told of a comprehensive school in the London area where the headmaster came to the governing body about six months after the official opening and asked their advice. A small number of boys were creating trouble amounting to a reign of terror; other boys had been slashed; masters had been threatened and in two instances had left. The headmaster could call in the police and have the hooligans charged with various offences and removed. Should he do so? That it should have been necessary to ask such a question, that a small handful of boys should have been able to divert the energy which would have been better employed in educating the very large number of non-delinquent boys going to the school, says a great deal for the conscientiousness with which our schools are conducted, but less for the common sense. It should have been obvious from the start that it is not the job of the ordinary school to reform incipient criminals. There are other institutions for that, and any reluctance to invoke them, however humane its motives, does nothing to help the delinquent and merely prevents the schools from doing their proper work—education.

² Mr. Amis's 'more means worse' has been much criticized—not least among university teachers—but he is really saying no more than had already been said by T. S. Eliot in the final chapter of his *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (Faber, 1948). The fact that similar criticism of present trends in English education should come from two such totally opposed sources should surely make us wonder if there is not something in it.

degree. What is to happen to him? Removed from his original environment, trained for a career for which he has proved himself unfitted, he represents a serious individual problem in himself as well as a reproach to the conscience of the humane university teacher. Moreover, if such cases are too frequent, education authorities, concerned at the waste of their money, will complain of low standards in university teaching or excessively high standards at examination time. The university authorities themselves, worried by complaints, will pass them on to their teaching staff. And, at this moment, when Tom Smith fails the pass examination in English literature by half a mark, what a temptation to lower the standard by just that fraction, to admit one more candidate, to avoid that worry about Tom Smith's future which any teacher worthy of the name must feel. So—perhaps—Tom Smith is deemed to have passed his final examination and goes away to become a schoolmaster and in due course turn out more Tom Smiths who will come up to the university to fail their pass degrees by a whole mark!

I am not suggesting that this process is going on to any great extent—it is rather difficult to estimate what actually is happening, and it is certain that the academic conscience will put up a stiff resistance to the sapping of standards. But I do think (and conversations with university teachers tend to bear this out) that the pressures are very much there and are liable to grow stronger. They are perfectly respectable pressures, of course, motivated by the deepest concern for the happiness of the individual and the fullest possible development of his potentialities. What does it matter if Smith fails to secure a degree when he has read plays of Shakespeare which he would not otherwise have looked at? Smith is a better, fuller person, for all his abortive university career. No doubt, but by his very presence Smith is placing a strain on teachers who are already overworked, using money that is in short supply and slowing up the pace of instruction for others. Nationally, we can just about afford to give him the opportunity to acquire knowledge. We cannot afford to spend the money for him (or anyone else who so desires) to become a 'fuller' person—this quite apart from the impossibility of deciding what a 'fuller' person is. Higher education in its institutional form cannot be a branch of psychotherapy open to all comers. On this level too there is a clash between intellectual and social values.

And one might, of course, resolve this conflict in favour of social cohesion and well-being. 'What's the odds, so long as we're 'appy?' is a

phrase which sums up quite a few current attitudes towards education. But if it is impossible for large, very powerful countries, producing most of what they want within their own borders, to take this view of the matter, it is far more impossible for ourselves, cramped within a small island and bound increasingly to live on our wits. If America and Russia are both finding that more attention must be given to the intellectual side of education then we should be even more concerned to ensure that children come out of our schools with some concrete knowledge in their heads and not simply surrounded by an aura of 'social adjustment'. It is a national interest that the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual discipline should have first priority in our educational system, and it could cease to be so only were the world to become far less competitive, or were Britain's position in it to be far easier than it is. As things are, the sacrifice of intellectual standards for social advantage would be one of the swiftest paths to national decadence.

I must confess that I also have a lingering Puritanical dislike of an ideal of education whose end is happiness all round and whose means do not include hard work.¹ At the risk of appearing priggish I find something slothful and repugnant about the whole concept of a formation based on such mushy imprecisions as 'a fuller personality', 'training for citizenship' and other popular catchwords, a schooling more calculated to shelter pupils from life than to prepare them for it, and apt to produce socially charming, well-adapted conformists without an original idea in their heads. If education has a task of character formation it is to develop a hard core within the personality, and this can be done only by a thorough immersion in work with all the hopes and disappointments which that entails. It is not by making school intellectually easier that we shall make it more attractive, it is by making it more difficult.²

¹ Cf. Mr. Dooley on the Education of the Young: '... I believe 'tis as Father Kelly says: "Childher shudden't be sint to school to larn, but to larn how to larn. I don't care what ye larn thim as long as 'tis onpleasant to thim.'" Mr. Dooley's *Philosophy* (New York, 1900), p. 249. Personally, I should hope for *something* to be acquired in the way of knowledge, but there is probably more to be said for Mr. Dooley's view of the matter than for some contemporary theories.

² In a country such as France the connection between the acquisition of knowledge and adult life is all too clear (the whole of one's career is liable to depend on academic success), and one result of this is that school appears less infantile and more of an introduction to real things than it does in England. This has its disadvantages too—due principally to overwork and a rather tiresome precocity—but at least French schoolmasters are never afraid to face their classes as they are here and in America. I know of no French equivalent to Michael Croft's novel *Spare the Rod*.

In fact, it is probable that a formal education primarily concerned with hard work for the acquisition of knowledge would produce better social effects than those educational devices more specifically directed to that end. Happiness, after all, is a by-product of other activities rather than something which can be directly desired and attained. But, however this may be, there is no question where the final choice between the intellectual and social aspects of education will have to lie. The damage done by a failure to produce all those highly educated people, whom a modern society needs to run it, would be too great not to be countered by any government with the utmost vigour once the threat had been realized. At present it has hardly been appreciated, first because the problem is a very new one, and, secondly, because of the existence of a large private sector in education from which a high proportion of the educated élite comes. This private sector is usually described as 'the public schools'.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

In 1865 Matthew Arnold gave a description of English education which is worth quoting at length:

'... what good instruction there is, and what schools of good standing there are to get it in, fall chiefly to the lot of the upper class. It is on the middle class that the injury, such as it is, of getting inferior instruction, and of getting it in schools of inferior standing, mainly comes. This injury, as it strikes one after seeing attentively the schools of the Continent, has two aspects. It has a social aspect, and it has an intellectual aspect.

The social injury is this. On the Continent the upper and middle class are brought up on one and the same plane. In England the middle class, as a rule, *is brought up on the second plane*. One hears many discussions as to the limits between the middle and the upper class in England. From a social and educational point of view these limits are perfectly clear. Ten or a dozen famous schools, Oxford or Cambridge, the church or the bar, the army or navy, and those posts in the public service supposed to be posts for gentlemen—these are the lines of training, all or any of which give a cast of ideas, a stamp or habit, which make a sort of association of all those who share them; and

this association is the upper class. . . . So we have amongst us the spectacle of a middle class cut in two in a way unexampled anywhere else; of a professional class brought up on the first plane, with fine and governing qualities, but disinclined to rely on reason and science; while that immense business class, which is becoming so important a power in all countries . . . is in England brought up on the second plane, cut off from the aristocracy and the professions, and without governing qualities.

If only, in compensation, it had science, systematic knowledge, reason! But here comes in the intellectual mischief of the bad condition of the mass of our secondary schools. In England the business class is not only inferior to the professions and aristocracy in the social stamp of its places of training; it is actually inferior to them, maimed and incomplete as their development of reason is, in its development of reason. Short as the offspring of our public schools and universities come of the idea of science and systematic knowledge, the offspring of our middle-class academies probably come, if that be possible, even shorter. What these academies fail to give in social and governing qualities, they do not make up for in intellectual power. Their intellectual result is as faulty as their social result.¹

The 'middle' or 'business' class as Arnold used the term has now extended itself to the working classes in education as in other things, and, bearing this in mind, his description of the evils resulting from the existence of two separate school systems stands up remarkably well nearly one hundred years later (in an earlier report of 1859 he had drawn attention to the 'immense money-price' at which the professional classes had bought their education—'a price which they can no better than the commercial classes afford to pay').² Moreover, it is significant that both the social and the intellectual injury to the 'business' and 'middle' classes are denounced by Arnold as mischievous effects of the prevailing school system. Nowadays it is principally on social grounds that we are exhorted to reform our schools. For Arnold the solution was to create state schools, which, like the French *lycée*, should be every bit as good as

¹ These paragraphs are taken from a report written in 1865 and are quoted in Arnold's essay 'Porro Unum Est Necessarium', *Mixed Essays* (Smith and Elder, 1880), pp. 147-9.

² *Ibid.*, p. 146.

the older foundations with which they would be competing. More recent critics of the public-school system often assume that nothing can be done to improve state schools until their rivals are done away with. These reformers are less optimistic than Arnold and perhaps less concerned with purely educational values.

Plans for the reform of Great Britain's school system usually have for their object the abolition of the gap between the public schools and the rest, which, so it is claimed, is a social evil in that it divides England into two nations, creates class consciousness and snobbery and maintains an outmoded aristocratic ethos—'pre-1914 types, moulded in the images of those times, set loose in a post-1914 world'.¹ Public schools were created during the nineteenth century in order to provide the necessary quota of officers and gentlemen to man the Khyber Pass or govern African provinces by a judicious mixture of force and evangelical Christianity. That kind of thing is believed to be no longer required, and it is especially no longer required when found together with a *morque* and an arrogance which make their possessors disliked whenever they come into contact with those who have not received their kind of upbringing. As a recent writer has put it—delicately enough—when speaking of British Foreign Office officials, they are 'inexperienced in and mostly unfitted for the administration of human problems affecting people beneath their own social level'.²

An admirable social case can be made out along these lines for the ending of the public-school system, and also, though this is usually less emphasized, for the deposing of Oxford and Cambridge from their present position of pre-eminence among English universities. What is a good deal more doubtful is the gain for education considered as the acquisition of knowledge which would result from the sudden abolition of the private educational sector. The state-school system, as administered by the local authorities and the Ministry of Education, is not in so efficient

¹ Martin Green, *A Mirror for Anglo-Saxons* (New York, 1960), p. 143. Mr. Green continues: 'They never understood or accepted the existence of factories, mass production, advertising, the radio, television, universal literacy, atomic physics, economics or psychiatry.' To which one might reply that if this is the case it is very odd that 'they' should either have run, or have had so large a say in, so many of these activities. It is a little absurd to talk like this in a book in which J. M. Keynes appears as pre-eminently one of 'them' ('patron of the arts and adviser to the government'), and therefore presumably never understanding, or accepting the existence of, economics.

² John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate* (Cresset Press, 1959), p. 232.

a condition that the absorption into it of the public schools would be possible without a certain amount of disorganization, which might even result in a considerable depression of standards for some years afterwards. Masters might resign, curricula would have to be changed, school books brought into line, school routine revolutionized. And there would always be the danger that if the merger were carried out in circumstances which aroused resentment (and there is every prospect that it would so be carried out to the accompaniment of conflicting political battle-cries) it would simply lead to local authorities retaining the names and the buildings of the public schools with the spirit of the institution departing elsewhere to new inelegant huts where upper-class children would still learn to get their credits in the G.C.E. from better teachers and in smaller classes than their contemporaries in the state system. Of course, it would be possible to forbid people to send their children to schools other than those administered by the state, but I should say at once that I for one would take this to be an intolerable affront to the rights of the individual.¹ It seems to me to be an inalienable right of parents to make that provision which they desire for the furtherance of their children's education.²

It is evident that the upheaval consequent on a sudden unification of the English school system would do damage to that system considered as a means for inculcating knowledge, and hence in the immediate future would hamper rather than further the supply of high-level pupils which is needed by the universities, and, later on, by those numerous organizations in search of talent in the various sectors of national life. And demands for an immediate abolition of the public schools regardless of the possible consequences are yet another form assumed by the willingness to sacrifice intellectual excellence to social convenience which we have already seen at work in English education.³ For to base the structure of a school

¹ It is interesting and significant to find a nineteenth-century head of the Russian police, Prince Dolgorukov, writing: 'The government cannot permit a situation whereby half the population owes its education not to the State but to itself or to the private benefaction of some particular class.' (Quoted in Franco Venturi, *The Roots of Revolution* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 288.) Despots have always been quick to understand the advantages of compulsory state education.

² As Raymond Williams puts it: 'It is not easy to argue that this limited social group has no right to provide the education it thinks fit for its own members.' *The Long Revolution*, p. 145. There are, however, many admirers of Mr. Williams's theories who are undaunted by this difficulty.

³ Two examples of current attitudes towards education: (a) In a court case centring on school attendance a mother, who did not wish to send her children to

system on a belief in the desirability of social equality is every bit as extraneous to the true purposes of education as Victorian character-building or nationalist nonsense everywhere. From the point of view of the country, which above all needs an efficient educational system, there is only one possible approach to the problem posed by a divided educational system. Reform must be examined in the light of whether the immediate harm done to intellectual standards by the disturbance of the present system will be outweighed by future advantages either in the properly educational or in the social sphere.¹

A UNIFIED SCHOOL SYSTEM?

The social advantages claimed for the absorption of the public schools into the state sector of education can be conveniently divided into three types, which also correspond to the main lines of attack on the public-school system. First, it is claimed, such a step would do away with the production of young men directed by the archaic set of ideals which has been mentioned above and which can roughly be summed up in the words 'English gentleman', a being whose *raison d'être* was the government of an empire now ceasing to exist.² Secondly, the abolition of the

school, but to educate them herself, was said by the prosecuting lawyer to be bringing them up entirely outside society—which he apparently equated with school. (b) A plan for the public schools put forward by John Vaizey provides that headmasters shall be free to choose the pupils they want, the only proviso being that they should choose their entrants 'from a pool composed of a completely representative sample, socially and intellectually, of the whole population aged 15'. *Encounter*, July 1961, pp. 57–8. What these two cases seem to have in common is that school is regarded as an instrument of social engineering without too much regard for its intellectual side either as a benefit received by school-children or as a criterion for the choice of pupils.

¹ It would naturally be claimed by anyone putting forward a plan for the unification of the English school system that if his views were adopted all would take place smoothly and without any drop in standards. All I can say is that, given the complexity of the factors involved and of the administrative system of education in England, it seems to me unlikely. In any case, a high degree of risk is a sufficient argument for taking this possibility into consideration.

² Cf. the opinion of Mr. Rée, the headmaster of Watford Grammar School, given in a letter to the editors of *Encounter* (April 1961, p. 87): 'That induced self-confidence which a Public School education still gives to a boy . . . is today being undermined . . . at the same time complacency which is often born of this ill-founded self-confidence will have to be pricked and burst, if the whole British economy is not going to be allowed to flounder in a self-satisfied slough of chauvinist unenterprise.'

public-school system is demanded on the grounds of social justice. It is unfair that some parents should be able to buy a better education for their children than others, and doubly unfair that a snobbish preference should attach to the products of the private sector of education when it comes to the choice of candidates for jobs. Thirdly, the division in the educational system nourishes and perpetuates that class system which is widely assumed to be one of the curses of contemporary England.

Before considering to what extent this anticipation of social advantage is justified it should be pointed out that there is a certain incompatibility between the first two claims. If, as the headmaster of Watford Grammar School says, public-school boys like 'the *Émigrés* of 1790' have been trained for the wrong century, then their parents are hardly buying them a 'better' education, and the social injustice is done to those inside, not to those outside, the system. It also becomes inexplicable why any preference should be shown for public-school boys by appointment boards who have, after all, their own interests to consider when it is a matter of getting the best man for the job. Either the public schools are a 'bad' system of education or they are a 'good' one from which poor boys are unjustly excluded. Both propositions cannot be true.

Despite Mr. Rée and Mr. Green, I find it difficult to think that they are a 'bad' system of education. Their intellectual merits are usually admitted even by their opponents, and, as far as encouraging an out-moded image of desirable behaviour and qualities is concerned, I can only say that this charge seems very exaggerated. In fact, university students seem remarkably similar in their view of the world, whether they come from public schools or grammar schools. The grammar-school boy may have less social assurance than his public-school contemporary, but this is surely a consequence of home background rather than of school training. Public schools have progressed since the war, and the picture of them as institutions devoted to the study of the classics and the pursuit of gentility has changed to something more nearly resembling schools engaged in preparing pupils for the higher levels of university education all over the world. They are also noticeably more humane, and, though they may still be designed to turn out a governing class, it is a different kind of governing class from that of even twenty years ago. No doubt some schools have lagged behind, but in general the public-school system has been modernized since the war to an extent not always realized by its critics. Some headmasters may still place an old-fashioned emphasis on

'character' rather than 'brains'—an opposition which in itself is only part of the competition between social adaptation and intellectual attainment that runs through the whole of the English educational system—but it is difficult to find grounds for the abolition of public schools in their conception of the intellectual and moral formation required by the modern world or to substantiate charges of an obstinate refusal to move with the times. At any rate, there is no evidence to suggest that England is being seriously damaged by a clinging to decrepit ideals on the part of ex-public-school boys.¹ It would be difficult to sustain that this section of the community is more old-fashioned or traditional in its approach to national problems than, say, the average trade-union leader.

A considerably stronger case can be made out for the abolition of our dual educational system in the name of social justice. For a sense of social justice demands that equally talented children should get equally good opportunities for their schooling and higher education. This is obviously not the case at the moment, though I fancy that those who anticipate the discovery of great stocks of unused talent by means of improvements in the present system are being optimistic. But if social justice demands the ending of unfair advantages for the children of wealthier parents the elementary human right to do something to better the lot of one's children, if it is to be respected, forbids a simple veto on private education. Moreover, there is also the problem of the principle of choice to be adopted by a reformed school system. In the present state schools the principle is that of talent as demonstrated in examinations, whether the eleven-plus or the G.C.E. Some voices—notably that of Dr. Michael Young—have been raised to denounce this tendency to install an educational ladder up which children must scramble with increasing effort and an increasing sense of competition. Certainly, our present system under which the whole of education at school is orientated

¹ Mistakes made by high civil servants and politicians are quite often attributed to their public-school background and, hence, to their lack of knowledge of the 'real' world. In fact, however, this explanation is not very satisfactory—especially if we observe that high civil servants and politicians without a public-school education make the same kind of mistakes as their peers. For the most part, the cause of such blunders can perhaps be described as remoteness from the 'real' world, but that remoteness stems from the inability of ageing men to keep up with a situation in constant revolution. One of the facts which observers of present-day English society should keep in mind is the vast difference in outlook separating those who were in their twenties before 1939 and those who only reached maturity during or after the war.

towards the winning of university scholarships is harmful in its narrowing effects and frequently unfair in its results, since it makes a child's future depend to a great extent on accidental circumstance—whether it was feeling ill or well at the moment of the examination and so forth.

Yet it must be accepted that once fee-paying schools are abolished the only possible test of who should go to which school is either by examination or the recommendation of the headmaster, or a mixture of both.¹ And in every case the result will be to assemble an élite of 'good' pupils at the top of the educational tree. Roughly speaking, this is the continental system of education, productive of very high intellectual standards, resulting sometimes in overstrain for the adolescents subjected to it and not significantly modifying the social structure of the countries concerned. This is not perhaps entirely what reformers intend when they talk of making education more 'democratic', but it is hard to see what alternative method could be adopted without lowering standards and slowing up the total process of education. Education, after all, is not a game of golf or a horse-race; you cannot handicap the more talented and give advantages to the more backward. When Mr. Williams asks: 'How else can we explain the very odd principle that has been built into modern English education: that those who are slowest to learn should have the shortest time in which to learn, while those who learn quickly will be able to extend the process for as much as seven years beyond them?', there is quite a simple answer.² First, that the very posing of the question is based on the fallacy that the object of education is to make one a 'fuller' person; it is not—the main object is the acquisition of knowledge of precise subjects and the mental discipline that goes with it. Second, that unless the whole population is to receive higher education—a possibility which seems excluded in the foreseeable future—efforts to impart learning are most economically made when directed to those most capable of receiving it. It is easy to accept the idea that children of equal intelligence should receive equal education, but when social justice is invoked to imply that the child of superior intelligence is in some way enjoying an unfair advantage which should be compensated for in the school system

¹ The best method would certainly be to make entry to the university depend on a mixture of yearly examinations accompanied by a headmaster's report. This would do something towards eliminating the unfair handicap which now affects late developers and children in bad health. It is a severe condemnation of our present educational system that it places a premium on precocity.

² *The Long Revolution*, pp. 146-7.

we enter the realm of nonsense.¹ Education is not a 'democratic' process in that sense—pace Mr. Williams, it is necessarily a 'dominative' process—and the kind of reasoning which thinks of it as though it were might be applicable in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or, for the matter of that, in a primitive tribe where any divergence from the norm is suspect, but has no relevance to a twentieth-century country forced to compete with its neighbours to make a living. Here once again (as in our discussion of 'culture' in general) we must recognize the unsuitability of terms imported from the political sphere and used, by analogy, for purposes to which they are unsuited.

The third reason which is given for wishing to unify the present system of English education is that the cleft in it perpetuates and sharpens class conflicts in themselves undesirable. And undoubtedly it is true that the division between public school and non-public school corresponds to the most obvious class differentiation visible to any observer of English society. The barrier is still roughly where it was in the time of Arnold. Although more of the 'middle' or 'business' class has passed beyond it, those waiting upon the other side have now been joined by a large portion of the working classes. Of course, there has been some blurring round the edges; there are many state-aided schools which are equal in social status to a minor public school. But, by and large, it is true that two different systems of education emphasize the existence of two nations, thus injecting an additional element of bitterness to a class structure which, viewed from outside, does appear to play an obsessive role in our national consciousness.

I have said that the public-school system 'emphasizes' the existence of two nations rather than 'creates' it because I think that there is little evidence that a more egalitarian educational system would do much to change the class structure of England. The correct comparison here is not the U.S.A. where, for historical reasons, the school system was based on a strongly egalitarian ethos, but France or Germany, in both of

¹ Cf. Brian Jackson's 'Streaming in Junior Schools' (*Guardian*, March 30th, 1962), in which, having been informed of the advantages of 'streaming' as regards quick learning, we are then told that 'a minority of teachers . . . claim that it splits off child from child and damages the child's social education'. And Mr. Jackson concludes: 'It may be that the real question is not "Why is Peter in the 'B' class?" but "Why are there 'B' classes at all?"' Whatever Mr. Jackson's intentions, his article hardly escapes the danger of appearing to advocate slower intellectual development in the name of a rather shadowy social ideal which is advanced without much consideration of its implications.

which countries a unified school system (the exceptions are confessional schools) has led to no modification of the class structure in the sense of an abolition of class distinctions. This was to be expected, for if intellectual quality is to be the criterion of a child's school career (and we have seen that it is impossible to take any other) then boys and girls whose talents fit them for professional positions of one kind or another will be thrown together. And these pupils will be in their majority of middle-class origin for reasons of heredity and environment. In other words, the effect of such a system will not be to modify the class structure of a country but simply to provide a more painless way for a poor boy to join the middle and upper classes, a new version of *la carrière ouverte aux talents*. In a country such as France, where the didactic power of teachers is strongly developed, it can also result in the formation of a highly trained intellectual caste much further from the majority of their fellow countrymen than is the case with the average product of the English public school.

But, however dubious the remedy may appear, the fact remains that our dual educational system does give a harder edge to distinctions which are already sufficiently cutting in themselves. Nobody can move in English society without being aware of the considerable amount of unhappiness caused by the existence of the rough-and-ready measure of class status which educational background provides. This is especially true of those pupils who do not subsequently receive a university education and so have no opportunity either to overcome the prejudices of others or to rid themselves of their own. And while it is easy to condemn oversensitivity or exaggeration of the benefits conferred by public-school education on its recipients in later life, there is still the uncomfortable fact that by drawing a discernible line the existence of two different school systems stresses divisions in English national life which would be better forgotten.

Just what gives the English class structure its special (and potentially hurtful) quality is not altogether easy to discern, and would require a series of books to discuss adequately. It is not that this structure is much more rigid than any comparable system in other countries; in fact, the degree of social mobility in Britain, France, Germany and (surprisingly) the U.S.A. appears to be of about the same order. England has traditionally been a society where the upper classes were not particularly exclusive about recruitment to their ranks, and this laxer attitude is one of the main

factors differentiating the English aristocracy from their continental opposite numbers. The truth of the matter seems to be that it is the position of the class barrier rather than its impenetrability which has caused the trouble. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the English upper middle class adopted the manners of the aristocracy instead of developing a specifically bourgeois type of behaviour for itself.¹ Of this choice the public schools became, to a great extent, the executors, while the decision itself must also have been affected by the necessity of finding administrators and soldiers to govern or defend a growing empire—positions which pre-eminently required a mixture of aristocratic manners and habits of command. The good side of this process was the inculcation into a large section of the English bourgeoisie of a conception of public service and civic probity which are not present to the same degree in the professional classes of other countries.² The bad side, as Arnold pointed out, was a sharp division within a class that was united economically, and also an undue deference towards the aristocracy and aristocratic values on the part of a section of society which might otherwise have been disposed to criticize them.³ The resulting class structure not merely appeared to raise an artificial barrier between those who would normally have regarded themselves as equals but also replaced a gradual transition from the working classes via the *petite bourgeoisie* to the *grande bourgeoisie* and the aristocracy by a sharp opposition between 'we' and 'they', 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Discontents arising out of class relationships were polarized by one particular chasm, whose sundering power was thereby exacerbated. And, as we have already seen, it is the public schools (especially in their role as arbiters of

¹ 'The clergy, and barristers, and officers of both services, who have commonly passed through the great public schools, are nearly identified in thought, feeling, and manners with the aristocratic class. They have not been unmixed gainers by this identification; it has too much isolated them from a class to which by income and social position they, after all, naturally belong. . . .' Arnold, loc. cit., pp. 145-6.

² The very fact that the word bourgeoisie in this sentence has a foreign air shows how far the English middle classes went in modelling themselves on the aristocracy. There is no English bourgeoisie with an outlook of its own and its own peculiar manners. In place of it there is something called the 'lower middle class', whose very name indicates a failure to arrive at superior standards which are nevertheless felt to exist outside it.

³ As I pointed out in Chapter 5 (p. 141), the reinforcement of middle-class Puritanism by aristocratic indifference have combined to produce the present inability of the upper-class Englishman to take seriously the claims of the creative artist and his art.

spoken English) that have helped to emphasize the existence of this great class divide.¹

Plainly, this state of things provides a powerful argument for the reform of English education. At present an Englishman's schooling is far too strong a pointer to his social position. Unification of the schools might not alter the class system, but it would probably lessen the inferiority and superiority complexes caused by it; no doubt there will always be educational 'insiders' and 'outsiders', but it is not to anyone's advantage that both sides should be so conscious of the fact. Unification of the school system to a greater extent than at present exists must surely, therefore, be regarded as highly desirable. Of the arguments in its favour, to my mind, the third (that concerned with the aggravation of class divisions) weighs heaviest, the second (that of social justice) less, in that any alternative arrangement will probably not be more 'just' except for a minority of talented children, and the first (that public schools are producing an outmoded type) is unconvincing. On balance the arguments are in favour of reform.

However, the shape that reform must take will depend on weighing the reasons in its favour against another factor mentioned earlier: namely to what extent the educational system of this country is likely to be damaged in the immediate future by the upheaval attending a sudden reorganization. Can such damage, moreover, be set off against the solid social benefit which, we have seen, is to be anticipated from a united school system? As it happens, there is little conflict here. The softening of the gap between classes, which appears to be the main reason for reform, is itself necessarily a long-term process. It is not something that has to be achieved in five years or even in ten. We should be lucky if we achieved it in fifty, and any attempt to hasten its coming is likely to create more class feeling than it abolishes. In other words, the unification of our educational system is not something that has to be carried out quickly even to attain the social good expected from it. And to avoid the damage to intellectual standards a premature reform might cause it is essential that it should *not* be carried out quickly. Here social convenience and

¹ The term 'upper classes' in itself suggests a blending of social layers which had formerly been arranged hierarchically. One might say that the late eighteenth and nineteenth century evolution of the English class system was the replacement of the old graduated structure extending from labourers to lords by the dualism of upper versus lower classes.

intellectual attainment seem to lead to the same conclusion. Add to that the moral right of parents to send their children to a private school if they so wish (as well as the practical impossibility of preventing them from doing so) and it becomes clear that the closing of the gap must be a long evolutionary process based on the improvement of the state schools rather than on the rapid elimination of the private sector.

IMPROVING THE STATE SCHOOLS

It is perfectly clear that it is a matter of urgency for Great Britain to take steps to raise the standard of its state-school system. Quite apart from the aim of providing successful competition with the public schools, even a modest expansion in numbers of university students would hardly be possible (or would be simply disastrous) without some such improvement. What can be done to effect that improvement can hardly be discussed here in detail, since such a discussion would require more technical competence in the domain of education than I possess. But there is certainly one retarding factor which must strike any outside observer as well as the unfortunate class that suffers from it. This is the extraordinarily depressed status of English schoolteachers both financially and socially. Badly paid, saddled with exhausting and (in some schools) dangerous work, unhonoured by the community they serve, teachers in the state schools seem to be the Cinderellas of a system which is willing to pay out hundreds of thousands of pounds for new shining schools set in new shining playing-fields but will not make available the money required for those who work in them to lead decent, carefree lives. No wonder that teachers are now in short supply. When I was up at Oxford (from 1943 to 1946) it was already the case that my contemporaries were willing to do anything rather than go into teaching, and things must be worse now that inflation has done its levelling work on meagre salaries.¹

No doubt the conditions for teachers are made worse by the Burnham machinery of negotiation, which appears to restrict those local authorities who might be willing to pay more to their teaching staff to the levels

¹ Some people will at this point begin to talk about a teacher's 'vocation', but, as with similar talk about the nursing profession, this seems to be rather a hypocritical way of avoiding a perfectly plain issue: that a salary scale beginning at £520 a year on appointment and rising to £1,000 a year (plus £110 emoluments) by the age of forty-four is not enough.

favoured by their less generous confrères. And more money will certainly have to be found for education, whether nationally or locally. But it is difficult not to wonder whether here too is an example of the social, as opposed to the intellectual, approach to education. A new school can be seen by everyone—education committee, aldermen and ratepayers. It is conducive to the welfare of children in an obvious way, their minds gaining from bright classrooms and well-stocked libraries and their bodies from spacious playing-fields and gymnasiums. The effect of a good teacher, on the other hand, is more subtle, discernible as to its results in the subsequent career of the individual boy or girl, in the class lists of the universities rather than in the scholarships awarded to them. The idea that it is better to be well taught in a barn than badly taught in a steel and concrete palace is one which demands a long experience of education, which must frequently be lacking in members of an education committee understandably concerned to economize where they can and also justifiably proud of the outward and visible signs of their work in the shape of new schools. In fact, it sometimes seems that English state schools will never prosper until they become far more subject to central control and direction than they are at present. Officials of the Ministry of Education may be just as disposed to save money as education committees, but they are also likely to be better informed about where to spend it to the best advantage. In fact, if they have to choose, they will be more disposed to opt for the good teacher rather than the new school.

I put this idea forward tentatively, since I am well aware that there is a good deal to be said against it (nor, for that matter, would I wish to suggest that to have to make such a choice is a particularly happy state of affairs). To advocate increased centralization is to go on record as being in favour of breaking one more of those local ties, which are becoming sacred cows just at the time when they are ceasing to have any real meaning. Yet at the moment we are surely getting the worst of both worlds; education authorities who negotiate as a body, thereby avoiding competition between themselves to attract good teachers, go their individual ways when it comes to the choosing of textbooks or curriculum, raising the cost and confusing the content of education. Moreover, there would surely be something to be said for having the appointment and salary of teachers made the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. For one thing, it might enable the gap between school teaching and university teaching to be bridged. In the same way as, in

France, being a professor in a *lycée* is regarded as preliminary to teaching at a university, and the same examination (the *agrégation*) is required for both, so in England graduates possessing good honours degrees could be attracted into teaching sixth forms (rather than into advertising and television), if there were a chance that they might subsequently obtain a university post. The introduction of this system might need pressure or persuasion exercised on the universities, but there is no reason why such a measure should not be carried through, and it would certainly have a powerful effect on recruitment to the teaching profession, particularly to that section of it whose empty ranks are so often bemoaned: sixth-form science masters. For such a hierarchy stretching from school to university, however, central control of staff would be essential. In fairness to candidates appointments would have to be handled by one authority.

There are other reasons for thinking that education might be better managed were it to be treated more on a national scale than it is at present: the lowering of costs, unification of textbooks, ironing out of differences between 'good' and 'bad' local authorities. However, the main advantage would be to make it easier for educational policy to be considered from the point of view of the country as a whole, its necessities and the competition it will have to meet in the world outside when engaged in the arduous task of earning its living or defending its interests. If it is essential that we should have more first-class physicists (or economists or orientalisks or philosophers), and if the process of getting them means that money has to be spent on special facilities for a few which might have gone on better accommodation for the many average pupils, then that decision will have to be taken, and there is more chance of its being taken at the school level (or, at any rate, of the issues involved being appreciated) if it is considered at the centre rather than locally.

And if it is true that in the schools education may be harmed by a 'social' rather than 'intellectual' conception of what it means it is doubly true that any such approach in the universities would be utterly disastrous. From this point of view much of what is written about institutions for higher education is irrelevant. I can understand and, up to a point, sympathize with the kind of difficulty described by Dennis Potter in his book *The Glittering Coffin*:¹ the gap that his Oxford education opened between himself and his working-class family, but this does not alter the

¹ Gollancz, 1960.

fact that no university has yet been invented which would not open such a gap and that the better the university, the greater it will be. The difference which exists between an intellectual who has received a higher education and his parents who have not is to be found in a wide variety of circumstances, countries and classes—not least among the English middle classes. It is a profound and painful difference, which has provided one of the recurring themes of European literature for quite a long time now, but it is not exclusively a result of Oxford or even of English society. The main purpose of Mr. Potter's sojourn at Oxford was to learn something. In so doing he cut himself off from his family, thereby incurring a feeling of guilt and disquiet.¹ This is certainly a disagreeable experience, but it is hard to see what conclusions to draw from it. Anyone who wishes to spare himself this sundering from his original *milieu* must recognize that the argument will develop into one against higher education as such rather than against a particular type of university. It is the business of a university to instruct its students, in the course of which process they may acquire a little wisdom as a bonus. But, whatever soothing influences may be dispensed by classical philosophy or scientific method, it is not its business to solve their personal problems or absorb the ambivalent emotions arising out of their being at a university at all. Indeed, I should go further and say that a university ought to create this feeling of ambivalence in its students by presenting them with knowledge and methods of work representing a departure from, and sometimes a break with, their former lives.² If a university has anything worth while

¹ As Mr. Green puts it (op. cit., p. 56), 'I had been radically separated from my home and relations; not by any crude snobbery, but by a genuine and inevitable introduction into a new mental world, with all sorts of tastes and desires.'

² In fact, Oxford and Cambridge are rather good places in which to gather some of that wisdom, which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. This seems to me to be due less perhaps to the teaching, which is not always outstanding, than to close contact with contemporaries within a framework of convention which ensures great liberty, while preventing possible extreme consequences of it. This is what leads Mr. Green, for example, while fairly obviously succumbing to the charm of the Oxford and Cambridge system, to denounce it as artificial and unreal: 'three golden years when every unpleasant fact is excluded . . .' (ibid., p. 57). One might, it is true, criticize the older universities as sheltering their students from the harsh facts of life and also (sometimes) for the quality of their teaching and the rather haphazard way in which instruction is organized. Personally, I feel that the second charge is the more serious one. I am not opposed to anyone having three memorable years in his life, and I think it is nonsense to say that undergraduates meet with no unpleasant facts during their time at the university. Inasmuch as Mr. Green's complaints are founded they refer to a certain spirit of *dilettantisme* which is to be

to offer it should swamp the minds of those who come to it, leaving them dizzy and changed irretrievably from what they were before.

THE CURRICULUM

The theme which has run through this chapter has been that of the clash between what I have described as the 'social' and the 'intellectual' aims of education, a clash which once existed in the public schools in the form of the notorious distinction between 'character' and 'brains'. Now, although its existence is usually denied, the same dichotomy is to be found in the potential conflict between the demand for the production of a sufficient number of high standard 'élite' pupils and the wish to use the schools for the realization of a number of social ideals: greater equality between classes, a reduction in juvenile delinquency or a general bettering in health and welfare. That such a conflict, when it exists, must be decided in favour of the intellectual tasks our universities and schools have to perform seems to me self-evident. As has already been said, in a country that must live by its wits we cannot afford not to possess the small élite that will give us the possibility of winning a race we are forced to run. Our margin is too narrow for us to risk the preponderance of social aims in our educational system. And, secondly, while we know very well what we are doing when we teach a boy or girl Latin or chemistry, we have very little idea of the consequences when we present them with our own ideas of what society should be or endeavour to form them into an approved social pattern. To teach someone Latin has a sense; to teach them citizenship or social ethics is meaningless, since these are subjects concerning which there is not only no consensus of opinion but also hardly any factual information. To inculcate into someone a dogmatic view of the world in which he has to live—apart from that minimum of dogma required in order that the social individual should live and let live—is to initiate a process which, if not impossibly vague, will be narrowing and therefore harmful. The 'social' approach to education is liable to be either meaningless or tyrannical.

Education certainly has a place for guidance in behaviour and, consequently, in belief, but this should not take precedence over the intellectual formation and development of the pupils. Strange as it may checked by a more rigorous intellectual discipline rather than by exposure to the 'real' world or transformation of the English class system.

seem, it remains the principal task of schools and universities to turn out people knowing something, facts or a method of acquiring facts about some concrete topic. But it is significant of a curious neglect of this side of education that there is one subject which is hardly ever mentioned in all the discussion of schools and their purpose which goes on in the Press or Parliament: namely the curriculum—what is actually taught there. And this silence is all the more odd in that it is quite plain that there is often something wrong either with the subjects studied or with the way in which they are studied. Modern languages are a case in point. Some time ago I lectured in my own somewhat indistinct English to the top form of a German high school, and in the course of subsequent questions it became perfectly evident that I had been understood and that a large proportion of the boys had a fluent knowledge of English. The same would not be true in an English grammar school, though whether the fault lies in the teaching or in the lack of an early start in learning a modern language it is hard to say. But it seems clear that French and German grammar should be taught in the primary schools (as they are in private preparatory schools), and that the fact that their absence passes without remark or protest indicates once more that lack of concern for the discipline of knowledge of which I have spoken. At present education in the state system provides far too few faculties for this kind of specialization (not that a modern language should be regarded as anything but an essential) early on in a child's school career only to become much too specialized later on. So far from getting the elements of French or German grammar at an age when it is easy to do so, pupils are left to learn it later, thereby crowding an already crowded curriculum. The results of this we know. It is the student who arrives at the university with an adequate knowledge of his own subject, but with no knowledge whatever of anything else, the arts student who knows nothing of economics, the scientist who has never heard of T. S. Eliot.¹

¹ I was shown recently a general knowledge paper set by a university teacher for twenty students. The students' own subject was English literature, and their average mark out of 50 was 19.5. Some of the detailed results are interesting. Only one candidate knew who Lord Keynes was or who wrote *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Nobody knew who Dr. Jameson or Solon were. Nobody knew which U.S. scientist was in charge of the making of the first atom bomb. One candidate knew who wrote *Death in Venice* and two who built the Suez Canal. The highest mark out of 50 was 30 and the lowest 10. Reading the questions, I should have expected any sixth-form boy to get more than 35, and it would not have been beyond the bounds of possibility for him to get full marks.

The most recent discussion of what should or should not be taught in the schools has been that excited by Sir Charles Snow's Rede Lecture, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*.¹ The thesis advanced in this lecture is well known by now. On the one side there are scientists ignorant of literature; on the other men of letters (and, it is strongly hinted, politicians and civil servants—all who have been exposed to 'the traditional culture') who are ignorant of science. Our humanism is, therefore, maimed and (since scientists have 'the future in their bones') our national future endangered—a state of affairs Sir Charles would like to remedy by more scientific education in general and by the provision of 'politicians, administrators, an entire community, who know enough science to have a sense of what the scientists are talking about'.²

Leaving aside the deeper implications of the Rede Lecture, which are dubious, it is difficult to disagree with Sir Charles when he demands better scientific education for those who make science their career and more general knowledge for the rest of us. For, if we take a slightly less dramatic view of the situation than Sir Charles, general knowledge is what his recommendations boil down to. The specialization is not as absolute as his chosen instances of physicist and novelist would make it appear; a linguist and an expert in acoustics are a good deal nearer each other. But it is a fact that increasing specialization is producing a vertical gap in our culture, and that this creates a serious problem with which education is bound to try to cope.

In fact, as the relevant paragraphs of the Crowther Report show, a good deal can be done in the schools to lessen the effects of specialization. The Science Masters' Association has worked out ways of initiating non-scientists into scientific method and history, and the report also concludes that 'there is no special difficulty in providing science specialists with the means of making themselves literate in the broad sense which we have given to this term. . .'.³ To carry this out depends on adequate staff and some concern on the part of education authorities—in particular, those who set the university entrance papers. However, despite the obvious good that would be done to our educational system by an attempt to instill into pupils the general knowledge which they at present so patently lack, it may be doubted whether arts students would gain from it any

¹ Cambridge University Press, 1959.

² Op. cit., p. 36.

³ 15 to 18, p. 276.

very deep appreciation of scientific thought. That thought is, after all, expressed in mathematical symbols, and no two or three periods of general science a week, no reading of Pelican books on physics or biology, is going to afford a genuine insight into it. Here the mediating factor could and should be philosophy, which Sir Charles Snow neglects, and any instruction in this in the schools is presumably unlikely, and not necessarily desirable. The Rede Lecture calls attention to an important problem, but it misses the fundamental point of the whole discussion: the necessity for students to be taught to think systematically and widely, so that they acquire the intellectual curiosity to investigate and the mental flexibility to assimilate the disparate phenomena of an increasingly complex world.¹

AIMS OF EDUCATION

In ending this chapter we return to the point at which we began: the hope that education as our only available instrument of cultural transmission may be a remedy (though not a panacea) for our present difficulties. It is my belief that what we should aim at is a raising of the intellectual level of our education, if necessary at the cost of some sacrifice of the social ideals with which its evolution has been associated, and that this will have a favourable effect on the general standards of our cultural life. For the alternative to a raising of these standards can only be their decline. As Mr. Eliot has put it, 'We know that, whether education can foster and improve culture or not, it can surely adulterate and degrade it.'² And, in the second place, an improvement in intellectual level is the only way open to us of creating an appreciative audience for what is good and a critical audience for what is bad. All the evils which are commonly cited as afflicting our cultural life come down to this: too small an audience for the book, film or broadcast which is of high quality; too large and, above all, too uncritical an audience for some of the nonsense put across by the mass-media. I stress the word 'uncritical', for it is this attitude on the part of the individual viewer or reader that allows television to exert what

¹ I have left aside here the many other aspects of the Rede Lecture with which I disagree. Perhaps my main objection would be the emphasis placed on science and technology as a means to power without any corresponding concern to see that power rightly used. The philosophy behind Sir Charles's 'Two Cultures' is very much the remnants of humanism.

² *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (Faber, 1948), p. 108.

'corrupting' influence it has or the 'popular' Press to get away with its moral obliquities. The moment that he distinguishes between entertainment that is good of its kind and the dreary repetition of stale formulae, then he has escaped from the deadeningly hypnotic effect, which seems to be the worst result of exposure to the mass-media. No doubt it would be both unrealistic to expect and priggish to desire that better education should transform a minority into a majority audience, and the withering away of the mass-media plays something of the same role in educational theory as the withering away of the state in Marxism. But something can surely be done to give more people a sufficient hold on what they learn at school for them to wish to enlarge the range of their intellectual and aesthetic experience later on in life. If there is a gap between the potential and the real public for good literature, good art, complex thought, then an improved educational system can do something to lessen it. Admittedly, we cannot be absolutely sure that education will 'foster and improve culture'. For the moment it may seem as though the spread of it has done the reverse, destroying settled ways of life and offering nothing in their place. But nevertheless we have no other choice than to behave as though it did. It remains the only possible means which can be used to remedy the cultural failure of a society sworn to bring spiritual, as well as physical, benefits to all classes of its citizens. No rearrangement of society can create genius, but we must hope that the nurturing of an audience for genius will not be beyond our capacity and we must not insult the majority of our fellow countrymen by an assumption of their inability to appreciate greatness. To this end education may help us, must help us, if we are to be helped at all.

I have used the word 'education' in both its 'intellectual' and its 'social' sense, but there is another meaning on which I have hardly touched: the acquisition of wisdom. It is because I am convinced that this may be attained through intellectual nourishment, but not through a forced integration into the momentary prejudices of society, that I would plead for more attention to the simple business of teaching and learning and less to social *ignes fatui*. Beyond the winning of our daily bread as individuals or a nation, beyond the material tasks for which acquired knowledge fits us, there does indeed lie a fuller life led in the presence of solemn and eternal truths, but this realm can be glimpsed only through hard work and persistent endeavour, and our lives will not be 'full' or 'exciting' because we have been told that they ought to be.

We can improve our culture only by examples of quality, and we are not likely to get them if the first question we ask about a school is whether its class structure is representative and its children 'well integrated'. It would be terribly easy to sterilize genius with a combination of psychoanalysis and confident social purpose. Then indeed the true aim of education would be forgotten, and the discipline of the intellect destroyed.

CONCLUSION

If we act only for ourselves, to neglect the study of history is not prudent: if we are intrusted with the care of others, it is not just. Ignorance, when it is voluntary, is criminal; and he may properly be charged with evil, who refused to learn how he might prevent it.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

*. . . Une barque qui pourrit sur la grève, celui qui la rejette aux vagues
. . . il peut être dit insoucieux de sa perte, mais non pas du moins de sa destination.*

JULIEN GRACQ

Previous chapters of this book have contained a discussion of a series of problems besetting contemporary England and causing a frustration and irritation among its intellectual classes which the latter have usually failed to perceive or analyse. These problems, as we have seen, fall into two categories. There are those arising out of Great Britain's decline in world power and other, mostly cultural, difficulties which have been brought about by the establishment of the Welfare State. Of these complementary phenomena the first has commonly not been seen for what it is, while discussion of the second has been thwarted by false definitions and the prejudices of most of those taking part in the debate. One of the recurrent themes of this book has been a failure to get to grips with reality on the part of the intellectual diagnosticians who are accustomed to offer us solutions for our discontents.

This, in itself, could suggest some alarming reflections. That the thought of a traditionalist should be turned towards the past is only to be expected, but what are we to say when, as at present, the same appears to be true of those who proclaim their desire for social and political reform? If the reforms they want are based on an unreal analysis

of what is happening both in England and in the world at large, then either they will never be put into practice or else they will be disastrous in their irrelevance. Intellectuals, if not necessarily precursors of the future, are at least symptoms of the society in which they live, and it is hard to consider the fashionable sentimentality with which contemporary intellectual discussion is increasingly diluted without feeling that a decadence of thought and sensibility cannot but be a sinister presage for the society where it occurs.

DECADENCE

In the past loss of power in the world has often been accompanied by a period of national decadence, by a decline affecting not only the external relations of a society but also its own intrinsic quality. Spain or Turkey decayed for centuries following their fall from power, and if Turkey was fortunate enough to have a Mustafa Kemal to give new life to the Anatolian core of the empire Spain has not yet found its great national leader to undo the enervation of centuries. Shall we, too, be added to the ranks of those countries on whom the loss of empire, the loss of purpose, have had a crippling effect? Or shall we manage to escape the descent into limbo?

The word 'decadence' has about it vague resonances of the orgies of Roman emperors or Renaissance popes. Yet it is not quite that, and the end of Rome was not due to the undesirable personal behaviour of Nero or Heliogabalus. There is no comparative study of the fall of empires, and it is doubtful whether one would be possible, but certain elements can be perceived. I should take the decadence of a nation to be demonstrated not so much by widespread infractions of moral rules, though this too may be a symptom of social crisis, as by a combination of rigidity and loss of nerve in its system of government and administration. On the one hand, there is a failure in authority among those who should lead their fellow citizens. Instead of leading, they are led by them. On the other, the machinery of government, moved by no real impulsion from above, becomes stiff and unwieldy, relying on the mechanical repetition of traditional gestures of administration to produce results which become less and less effective as time goes on. And, since these gestures will finally be seen as meaningless by those whom they affect, the mass of the population will come to be compelled by the state rather than led by

statesmen. There will be a crucial gap between the will of the administrators and the will of the governed—an opposition which, in the absence of dynamic political leadership, will be resolved to the advantage of the anarchic tendencies of the ordinary citizen rather than by positive measures of reform. There will be a loss of civic sense on the one side and a cowardly clinging to power or honest obsession with bureaucratic order on the other. A country in such a condition naturally becomes more and more unfitted to cope with the fundamental changes which its initial diminution of power has made essential. Decadence in nations can be defined briefly as a failure to adapt sufficiently quickly to changed conditions. And if this failure is prolonged, then there will be an ossification of society affecting every sector of it: politics, economics and culture, and producing in the long run a disaffection towards the state on the part of the citizen.

No sincere observer of contemporary Britain could claim that signs of such a national hardening of the arteries were lacking. 'Do not go to post-war England if you are in need of a tonic', wrote M. Siegfried in the late twenties. 'It is not sufficiently invigorating.' And more than thirty years later a book on the economic aspects of our problems could be entitled *The Stagnant Society*. I have not dealt with the substance (as distinct from the psychological by-products) of our continuing economic crisis, since I have not the technical competence to discuss it adequately, but one of its most obvious features is that ossification and impotence of government which is associated with the idea of decadence. Since the war (and, indeed, for a number of years before it) we have seen an efficient system of administration furnished with as many powers as governments backed by large majorities in the House of Commons cared to take failing to cope with a national problem which has become more and more pressing. Officials have put forward palliative after palliative and expedient after expedient, the politicians have exhorted sectional interests to think of the good of the whole, but all to no avail. Indeed, since the war, it might well be argued that the staving off of the worst kind of economic disaster by a skilful use of Keynesian methods has made far more difficult the task of preparing the electorate for those fundamental changes which must come about if we are not to look forward to a future of isolated decay. The general impression which the average citizen has gathered from our economic policies since the war has been one of ceaseless activity on the part of government and administration, but

always leading back to the same threat of crisis which was the point of departure. All he has felt is a psychological constriction, which is either an irritation or else has grown so familiar that he has ceased to notice it.

For many years now the huge machine of British government has been run with grindings and tremors that interrupt its smooth functioning, and those responsible for keeping it in order, for all the considerable powers that have been delegated to them, have failed to remedy even the most obvious sources of trouble. For instance, it has been clear for quite a long time that our present system of taxation is both cumbersome and inequitable and stands in need of drastic reform, but nothing has been done to bring that reform about, whether the weight of day-to-day administration does not permit harassed officials to give their attention to such questions or whether they genuinely fail to see the necessity for change. And the same apparent inertia also seems to be present outside government offices. Our industrialists, so we are told, prefer catering for a safe home market rather than taking the risks and expending the energy needed to sell exports; they are reluctant to modernize or learn from the methods of other countries—even reluctant to work harder. As for the trade unions, it is common knowledge that their antiquated organization and restrictive practices in industry are archaic and destructive of the very ends they are intended to serve. What were once organizations designed to serve a real need have become the dinosaurs of our economy, lumbering slowly towards a prey that frequently eludes them and doing great damage to new growth on the way. Nobody would wish the working classes not to be represented in their bargaining with employers or to draw less than their fair share from industry, but must their representation be a focus for all the inert conservatism and suspicion of novelty which they secrete within themselves? Can their leaders not lead? Here again we are faced with rigidity of institutions and a failure at the top, which is likely to be with us for a long time despite the courageous efforts of the present General Secretary of the T.U.C.

If institutions have their own inertia, and the behaviour of administrators, whether of Treasury, bank or trade union, tends to set hard in the moulds of the past, then, in each case, it will be for the political leadership to break through the crust of tradition and produce forms more adapted to the necessities of the moment. That political leadership is the job of government, and it is a justified complaint against governments of all complexions since the war that it has been forthcoming only on rare

occasions. In the economic sphere it seems hardly to have been forthcoming at all. Apparently, it is the case that, as a nation, we have been living beyond our means since 1945, but we have hardly been told so in convincing accents, and no government has acted in a prolonged and decisive way to bring this state of things to an end. The alternatives of harder work or a lower standard of living have not been put before us in their full brutality, and on the occasions when there has been 'austerity' or a 'credit squeeze' we have been assured that it would not be for long and that this was the final effort which would put things right. Is it surprising that appeals to the electorate for abstinence and thrift should go unheard and that a pay pause should bring forth anguished protests?

Democracy as a system of government suffers from this paradox: that, while it encourages politicians to propitiate the electorate, it also deprives them of authority over the country once their flattery of its immediate desires is detected. At the moment neither of our main political parties enjoys the moral respect of the mass of Englishmen, and the reason for this is that they have both failed to govern when they might have done so. Neither of them has conveyed to the average voter much assurance of knowing what was to be done and intending to do it, and this failure has frequently appeared to be one of will rather than of intelligence.

Now, with the projected entry into the European Economic Community, a British government has taken its courage in both hands and embarked on a course which, whatever reservations may be held concerning it, is the one decisive step to determine our future that has been taken since the war. But the spectacle of a government preparing a major transformation of policy by unpopular measures is so unexpected and unwelcome that it has produced a markedly unfavourable reaction from the electorate. A threat from a foreign enemy or a natural catastrophe will be able to draw on the stocks of devotion and unselfishness that exist within the ordinary man. The menace can be demonstrated, and therefore appears real to him. It is traditional, he is used to it. But no means has yet been found of conveying to him the complexities of an economic situation which may end in catastrophe, and he resents any measures taken to deal with it that may affect himself. So that people, who in time of war would not dream of saying 'let the others fight', feel in peacetime that sacrifices should be sought elsewhere than from themselves. And this is one instance of a failure of communication between the modern state and its citizens which is echoed in talk of 'we' and 'they', in the

obstinate sectionalism of corporations and individuals. This is something that goes far deeper than the post-war difficulties from which we have suffered. It raises the question of the relationship between the citizen and the state—which is also the question of the individual's attitude towards authority.

CITIZEN AND STATE

In an earlier chapter it was said that there were signs in contemporary England that the pressure of the state on the individual, though beneficent in intention, was often felt to be oppressive and irritating in practice. No doubt such irritation is inseparable from the action of a modern bureaucracy, which can hardly be other than impersonal, and more recently it has been increased by a feeling that the scope of English society was narrowing, the sense of constriction that goes with loss of power. This kind of pressure will always be felt most by intellectuals, and various attempts on the fringe of Bohemia to find a *pied-à-terre* as far removed from society as possible may be one reaction to it. What would be much more significant (and alarming) would be if there were any clear signs of the development of an *intelligentsia* in the continental sense of a body of intellectuals placed outside society and inspired by a nihilistic hatred for it and its traditions. For the moment the nihilistic sentiments expressed by English intellectuals seem to run skin-deep, and a divorce between them and the British state would become a reality only if there were to be serious intellectual unemployment—a possibility which educational expansion and our precarious economic situation does not allow us to exclude.

But if for the present the pressure of the state on the individual excites no more than bad temper, that does not mean that there is no problem. At present the British state is both too much with us and too little with us. It is too much with us in small things, in the complication of forms to be completed, in the cost and the slowness of legal formalities, in the incidence of taxation and the Philistinism of official attitudes. It is too little with us in the imparting of any constructive sense of national purpose, in the setting of some end to its activities with which we should be glad to be associated. There has been a dissociation of that emotion which we call patriotism from the ordinary business of government and administration. We are Englishmen despite the British state, which

has ceased to present its ideals to us in any meaningful form and whose bureaucracy, so it seems, wishes to keep the citizen apart from government. That state can compel us, if it so desires, but, to judge from experience since the war, it can no longer expect us to respond to its appeals. It has lost (or is losing) its moral authority over us. Many of us will cheat it when we can, and others will hardly be prepared to exert themselves for its sake. And yet it remains the collective expression of our society. Harming it, we harm ourselves.

Some of this feeling is inevitable, but some of it could certainly be eliminated were the state prepared to make a concerted effort to simplify the operation of its edicts as they affect individuals. The problem of bureaucracy and of the distance which lies between the proclamation of rights and duties and their enjoyment or performance by the citizen is not one which is peculiar to Communist societies. It touches every modern state by the mere fact of its being a modern state. It is the business of politicians to fill the gap—a business which they once perceived more clearly than they do now, but which tends to be neglected amid the administrative duties of office or rendered impossible by the complexity or arcane character of the issues at stake. For the exercise of authority is a dialectical process. We are right to demand leadership, but it is not to be imagined that leadership can conjure inspiring causes or reassuring policies out of the air. Often it cannot ask more of us than to trust it. We can and should criticize those who govern us, requiring from them accounts and explanations, but there must also be times when we are compelled to give them our confidence and trust them to use the full authority of the state. The acceptance of that authority is the duty of the citizen, and his contribution towards a closer identification of himself with the collectivity. In a sense it is an act of faith, but one which he must make in order to reap the rewards of belonging to a stable and prosperous society.

An exaggerated distrust of the principle of authority is the decadence of liberalism more likely to bring about, first the impotence of the body politic, and then its domination by some energetic tyrant, than the preservation of our liberties. It is not easy to demand more respect for the authority of the state without being misunderstood, but constant attacks on its civil servants and soldiers and police, an outcry at every decisive action and a readiness to believe every canard when it is told of a government servant—all this stone-throwing by professional *frondeurs* will

produce no other effect than the long-term enfeeblement of society and the immediate evils the critics fear. A civil servant irritated by unjust criticism will hardly listen to reasonable arguments; a policeman wrongly accused of brutality will be less particular about his methods in the future; and a politician with a reputation for corruption will not bother to be honest. The right of criticism should carry with it the duty of responsibility, but it is far from doing so in contemporary England where the most vociferous defenders of civil liberties at home bring discredit on the attitudes they adopt by a crass ignorance or a bad faith which can lead them to slavish adulation of plainly totalitarian regimes abroad. The state and those who serve it must be granted their due if the citizen is to receive his, but it sometimes seems as though the dialogue is breaking down.

The decay of respect for authority is a general phenomenon, visible at all levels of human activity, and its nemesis is that it is accompanied by a decay in authority's respect for itself. On the most elementary level, that of the family, it is a matter of common experience that a weakening of the parents' belief in their right to exact a measure of obedience from their children leads to confusion and also to unhappiness. The 'teen-age' cult, of which we hear so much nowadays, is in one of its aspects a nauseous form of flattery of the young by the not so young or the middle-aged, who are ready to write about the problems of adolescents with a *schwärmerei* that is harmful to both of them. In the cultural field the break-down of the concept of authority takes the form of a desire to make the exceptional man depend on society and of a fear of 'dominative attitudes' which we have seen amply illustrated in contemporary England. In education its traces are to be found in a failure to instruct and the substitution of 'social adjustment' or a 'fuller life' for the proper business of learning. In the relationship between the individual and the state it leads to an increasing isolation of, and rigidity within, the state machine, a refusal on the part of the citizens to accept the political leadership which alone can break through that rigidity and, ultimately, a failure of nerve on the part of the leadership itself. This state of affairs I have called the decadence of a country, and one of its symptoms can be seen today in the recent successes of the Liberal Party, representing, as they do, a revolt on the part of a section of the electorate against the very idea of political authority. Decadence, indeed, has many causes, but it both produces, and is hastened by, a refusal to accept the part of authority in the state or to confront the disagreeable facts of the exercise of power.

For it is still true that the ultimate sanction of state authority is force, and that any society has the right to employ that force incarnate in the state when it feels itself threatened from within or without. The dilemma stated by Saint-Just is as true today as ever it was: *'Un gouvernement a la vertu pour principe; sinon la terreur. Que veulent ceux qui ne veulent ni vertu ni terreur?'* It is the tragedy of state power that virtue is rare, that society rests upon armies and policemen, but to forget this fact is to invite anarchy. And, while it is true that the relative virtue of a state should be measured by the rarity of the executions or detentions which it orders, for that very reason it is criminal folly in a democratic regime to defy authority by breaking the law rather than to attempt to change it. The state is by definition a sleeping tiger. To place it in a position where it has to show its teeth or cease to function is to run the risk of losing carefully accumulated stocks of liberty and tolerance. For these assets have no very necessary connection with our present political system. They were originally aristocratic qualities, which came into being through the existence of personal status—the first person to be tolerant of anyone was a duke being tolerant of another duke because he was a duke—and gradually affected other classes. A refusal to obey the law of the land places this accumulated historical capital in jeopardy. Anarchy in the citizen leads to tyranny in the state. There is a fatal dialectic, which anyone acquainted with the history of the Weimar Republic cannot have failed to observe, by which the nuclear disarmer sitting him or herself down in Trafalgar Square in comfortable defiance of the authorities leads to other and less agreeable illegality and, in the end, to the apparatus of the police state.

EUROPEAN REMEDY

The relationship between government and governed in contemporary England is, therefore, not without its alarming symptoms when we compare it with that which has prevailed in the moment of decline for other countries and other societies. And this impression is deepened when we consider the curious atmosphere of stuffy isolation which has made itself felt in England since the war. Not only in the sphere of government, but also in social and economic relations, one is struck by a certain negative quality in our present society. Individuals like governments seem to feel that they have little freedom of manoeuvre. The picture of England most current among Englishmen today is one of an ageing country turned

in upon itself. We doubt our own modernity, while refusing to accept ideas from outside.

No doubt all this is explicable in terms of economic stringency and declining power. Some efforts have been made to put the blame on to other features of our society—the class system, the public schools or the trade unions—but these have always existed, and if they have now become deadening in their effects it is because of some more general cause. The social homogeneity of England and the tendency of its inhabitants to respect hierarchical distinctions made for stability at a time when national life was dynamic and expansive. Now that an impetus is lacking they provide an immense fund of inertia where it is already all too plentiful. Our nationalism and contempt for foreign opinion, which served us well during many crises in our history, have also come to reinforce a self-satisfaction that makes us either heedless of what is going on in other countries or else certain that it cannot have anything useful to teach us. Once we turned our back on the world from strength. Now we do so from weakness. Nothing is more comical than to hear both sides of English industry (Capital and Labour) uttering anguished cries about the unfairness of other peoples working harder than we do. Sometimes it seems that in our present diminished position our very qualities as a nation are working against us. They are, indeed, the qualities (and the defects) of the powerful, acquired during a nineteenth century of British preponderance, and which must now be transformed or allowed to wither.

Even those institutions of which we are most proud stand in urgent need of reform. Our Parliamentary system, for instance, which we usually take to be the cynosure of neighbouring eyes has very obviously been left toiling in the rear of the increasing range of phenomena with which the business of government is concerned. The House of Commons is deemed to exercise democratic control over Britain's day-to-day administration, but the growing complication of the facts before it does not allow it to fulfil this task from the vantage-point of much real knowledge. How can an average M.P. criticize a brief from the Treasury or the Ministry of Defence when he has little access to the information which he needs and when that information is, in any case, too complex to be digested by anyone except an expert or someone having the assistance of an expert? M.P.s do surprisingly well with what they have, but the House of Commons does not provide them with any of the

machinery they need for tackling such problems, and it is rapidly becoming obvious that a member of an extra-Parliamentary body such as the National Economic Development Council will have far more influence over the future shape of Great Britain's economy than any M.P. can hope to exert. The importance of Parliamentary control, even the urgency of restoring it where it has been diminished, is fairly generally admitted, but there is little or no debate as to how we should go about it—above all in the political parties. Sooner or later we shall have to decide such matters as whether or not to have Parliamentary committees on the American model, whose business it is to make themselves acquainted with what goes on in the world of administration and whose powers include those of citing officials as witnesses and calling for papers. This may not be the method of control best adapted to our own system, but it is one alternative that will have to be considered, and, at present, there is no very evident sign that anyone is considering alternatives at all. The reform of political institutions, like other reforms, is retarded by an inertia of our own creation.

Fortunately for its inhabitants, in reality England is not isolated, cannot be isolated because of its geographical position and its dependence on foreign trade. Even if we wished to be allowed to decay quietly we should not be permitted to do so. Perhaps the signs of decadence are there, but it is easy to see that they cannot develop very far without causing a catastrophe against which we should be bound to react. This may well be true of all modern industrial countries, and it is especially true of England, with its dense population and its complex economy. Were we not to pay our way, then we should starve, and any considerable spread of obsolescence into our national life would tip what is already a very delicate balance against us. The realism implied by our application to enter the European Economic Community has in some sense been forced upon us, and this may be our salvation. For the danger of declining power lies above all in its sapping of the will to resist, in its initiation of a long, unobserved process of enfeeblement, against which it is hard to react, since there is no moment at which any specially sharp crisis calls forth a response from the weakened organism. Since 1945 we have known something of this national anaemia, and the advantage of the prospect of association with Europe is that it will force us to fight the malady or succumb to it. Impending entry into the Common Market puts our economic alternatives in a way that it is difficult to misunderstand,

and the question that poses itself is one which cannot be staved off by the manipulatory palliatives we have so far applied to our difficulties. Whatever the result of Great Britain's launching into the European stream, it cannot be listlessness and stagnation. Any historically important decision always carries within it the possibility of a catastrophe, but, even supposing that it were feasible for us to rot in isolation, I should have to think very ill of my countrymen to believe that they would be unwilling to accept the risks involved in the attempt to make for themselves a living national existence.

And this choice is not to be made in the field of economics alone. At present our national life suffers and will suffer increasingly from lack of scale. A question that now has to be answered in almost every field of human endeavour is whether, as a small nation, we can carry out this, that or the other plan. Can we afford a space project and, if not, how can we expect those of our scientists who are interested in the knowledge gathered from space projects to accept a permanent inferiority as regards the possibility of experiment? Can we afford a first-class school of oriental languages, and, if not, will not our best students of such subjects go elsewhere? Is it not frustrating for officials of first-class ability to serve a power whose influence in the world is diminishing and which cannot compensate their frustration by the rewards to be found in the business world?

To this kind of query posed so insistently by the diminution and constriction of Great Britain's world position entry into Europe provides a satisfactory answer. If we cannot afford a space project, a supersonic airliner or massive expenditure on research in the universities, then Europe—the Europe of the seven or eight or nine—can. If British officials are frustrated, then European officials need not be, since they will be guiding a unit potentially quite equal in power to that of any other political body in the world. One of the meanings of entry into Europe for Britain is *la carrière ouverte aux talents* with all that that implies for a great range of able men who are no more than normally ambitious. And this is more important than it may seem. Nothing is more frustrating to a clever man than to find that he cannot rise to the top of his profession not because of his own failings but because he happens to belong to a small country, and nothing is more of a loss to a society than a continual drain of first-class emigrants, who prefer exile to claustrophobia at home.

Association with Europe, therefore, offers England not merely a

way out of its economic difficulties but also a form of relief from the psychological pressure engendered by loss of power in the world. And it may offer more than that: a positive programme capable of attracting the enthusiastic support of Englishmen who have become sceptical concerning the ends proposed to them by their own state. In my chapter on foreign policy I wrote of the necessity for us to find some larger unit with which we could develop a growing, organic association that would eventually take the form of symbiosis. Such an aim is consonant with the undirected idealism which is present throughout English life and only awaits a catalyst to precipitate it. It is not, after all, a small thing that Western Europe, so torn by war and the demons of national hatred for hundreds of years, should find again the unity which was lost at the fall of the Roman Empire. The new unity will be based on self-interest—as was the old—but political constructions which are not built on that foundation are not likely to be lasting, and there is more than a little hypocrisy in making of this a reproach to a historical movement, whose origins are not without idealism and whose infusion of egotism is no more than is needed to make it a practical proposition. As to the form that unity will take, and its future place in the pattern of international relations, I have already said that I regard the European Economic Community and the further integration to which it will lead as restoring to Western Europe its freedom of action. After that the future will be decided by the peoples and statesmen of the countries concerned.

No doubt, we shall not enter Europe without passing through a phase of political and psychological crisis. If our entry into the Community is the cure which will rid us of the neuroses engendered by loss of power and constriction of opportunity, then the process of debate and negotiation preceding it can be compared only to the moments during which these subconscious motivations are brought up on to the level of consciousness, producing screams and hysteria. As in the case of Suez, partisans and opponents of Great Britain's entry into the Common Market often draw their opinions from the irrational sources of the unconscious rather than from an appreciation of the issues involved. We must expect these convulsions in the body politic—birth pangs which may be the prelude to the profound calm of a newly won security—as the forces of national atavism, complacency and inertia fight to avoid destruction. For the moment—and, let us hope, only for the moment—this blindly instinctive opposition to change seems to have entrenched itself in the

Labour Party. It is the Conservatives who are the revolutionaries this time. But this ironic and even tragic reversal of roles as between our main political parties should not obscure what is at stake. The choice is one between youth and age, between growth and decay, between the will to build a future for England and a nostalgic clinging to its past.

For if our passage into Europe is successfully achieved, and we succeed in weathering the revolution it will bring about, then we should find the arteriosclerosis of our society beginning to cure itself. The impact of new ideas and new methods which we can neither parry nor neglect will force us to reconsider our obsolete presuppositions and to quicken our reactions to the activities of those abroad. In the process we shall find that some of our preoccupations have been superseded and that other problems must be transcended rather than solved (it is, for instance, prosperity and not revolution that will modify our class system decisively). In fact, we have been lucky. The idea of European unity has taken on just enough substance to save us from the worst of the nostalgia and bitterness that follow the end of empires. We have been presented with a ready-made substitute for that self-indulgent contemplation of diminished greatness, to which we seemed ready to abandon ourselves. Our very vulnerability may prove to have rescued us from querulous decay. 'Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight it concentrates his mind wonderfully.' After our entry into Europe we shall be conscious of the necessity not only for concentrating our minds but for bracing our sinews and hardening our willpower as well.

INTELLECTUAL ABDICATION

But if one can feel some confidence that the narrow margin on which England lives will spur us on to overcome the paralysis of decadence, can we also expect English intellectuals to play a constructive part in this process? Much of this book has been devoted to showing the inadequacy of their reactions to the great changes which the post-war world has brought about inside their society. This inadequacy has often been due to a failure to appreciate properly what was happening around them, to a lack of objectivity and an insufficient knowledge of either political or cultural history. At the moment, and despite the more realistic attitudes immediately following on the war, I must confess that the great majority of what may be called 'liberal intellectuals' seem to me to have forgotten

the lesson of the thirties and to have cut themselves off from reality in a way which anyone acquainted with the utterances of French intellectuals over the last ten years will find all too familiar. Just as it is possible to read *L'Express* and *Les Temps Modernes* without realizing that France has been passing through a second industrial revolution since 1950, so English intellectuals have usually refused to take a straight look at the altered international position of England, contenting themselves with demands for the use in this or that direction of a power whose dwindling they failed to observe. Emotionally they have given vent to outbursts of rage and pain, to gusts of chauvinism and *Schadenfreude*, but there has been little in the way of a genuinely intellectual reaction and still less in the way of intellectual leadership.

This again is a question of authority. Among large sections of intellectuals there is still a reluctance to think a question through to the end and then to take up a firm position on it, which, if it proceeded from humility, might be an admirable thing. Unfortunately, it usually seems to come from a vicarious assumption of guilt and a desire for identification with some group, in whose innocence the intellectual may participate, thereby escaping from his social ties with the middle class and also from the incubus of a national history which he dimly feels has failed. Is English imperialism ending with a whimper? Then the liberal intellectual will identify himself with the Africans and their struggle for independence, turning across the Atlantic to Dr. Fidel Castro when President Nkrumah appears to have disadvantages. Are the working classes, once the cynosure of progressive eyes, adopting increasingly bourgeois values? Then let us go for our excitement to groups lying outside the thrall of normal society: the teen-ager, the beatnik and the criminal. And so we have the ridiculous spectacle of middle-aged intellectuals going through an *éducation sentimentale* in coffee-bars and clubs, where the provoking sexuality of the adolescent, the engaging frankness of youth and the moral uplift engendered by an excursion outside their normal haunts combine to convince them that they are encountering the liberated future. In fact, what they are encountering is themselves, those necessarily bourgeois and balding selves which they would give so much to leave behind. They have, of course, the right to amuse themselves as they wish, but when we are told that the teddy-boy (complete with flick-knife—otherwise where would be the titillation of violence?) is 'significant' or 'representative' it is time to make a protest.

The word 'youth' is very evocative politically, and it has nearly always been used for bad ends. Nobody has yet tried to use teen-age gangs as similar groups were used by the Nazis and the Communists under the Weimar Republic, but we should not think that we are immune from the polarization of innate youthful violence for political purposes.

This last type of pseudo-identification, which appears to be so fashionable in contemporary Bohemia, possibly deserves to be taken more seriously than past fads. A desire to merge with the working classes was ridiculous, but did no harm and even some good, inasmuch as it called attention to the need for social reform, and something similar might be said of the Afro-Asian cult. An attempt to cultivate elements deemed to lie outside society, just because they lie outside society, may have far more tiresome consequences. Not only does it do no good to those towards whom it is directed—it may sound old-fashioned, but what one wants to do with a drug addict is cure him, not sentimentalize over him—but it also absorbs the attention of intellectuals to the exclusion of more central developments inside the society against which they imagine themselves to be revolting. Seeking for 'reality' on the periphery of social life, they end at a further remove from it than when they started. A Bohemian pseudo-rebellion against society simply deprives the rebels of any chance they may have had of exercising legitimate influence, and, in so far as they are intellectuals, will prevent them and their ideas from receiving that serious attention which might end in reform. At present a considerable section of our liberal intellectuals have placed themselves in a position where their views can no longer be taken seriously either by those who would like to transform England or by those who would wish to keep it as it is.

If English intellectuals wish to enjoy the proper authority of intellectuals, then they must get over the guilt which leads them to wish to be identified with groups to which they do not belong. They must accept their own position in English society—a middle-class position—and realize that they cannot escape responsibility for the past or the future of their country. It is, indeed, an essential condition of thinking about the present state of England that we should view its history without feeling ourselves under the necessity either of apologizing for it or of seeing it through rose-coloured spectacles. 'I for one, feel no shame', wrote FitzJames Stephen, 'when I think of the great competitive examination which has lasted for just 100 years and whose first paper was set on

the field of Plassy and the last (for the present) beneath the walls of Delhi and Lucknow.' The metaphor is that of an Indian civil servant, but the sentiments have a robustness which is at least not inhibitive of action. We must get it firmly into our heads that there is not the least reason to offer apologies for our history. On the whole, our national record is not a discreditable one, and even were it so an elaborate assumption of guilt would saddle us with something of the same burden of absurdity as that borne by the man who, on entering a room, immediately apologizes for the ugliness of his face. Such gestures may not be entirely void of justification but they are not helpful.

And the same is true of attempts by intellectuals to evade the bourgeois condition which, in terms of standards and way of life, their status as intellectuals imposes on them. All Mr. Williams's talk of 'dominative attitudes', all the *Proletkult* of the thirties and the extra-social cult of the sixties comes down to an unwillingness to take the responsibility for performing the duties of that minority whom we call 'intellectuals'. Their authority is the authority of thought. Their duty is to think well in their own particular lines and also to make such general reflections on the society in which they live as will serve to map out possible territories of future reform. They are supposed to be able to take a cooler and more general view of things than is available to individuals immersed in the battle of sectional interests. They may be partisan, but they should not be sentimental or superficial. Yet that is exactly what they will be, what they have been, if they are driven by their own neuroses to flatter an age group or a social class and to derive delusive feelings of moral superiority by hectoring their middle-class fellows. There is an essential Olympian fairness about the analysis of English nineteenth-century society which we find in the great Victorians. I do not know where we should look for it today. Prejudice, egotism or fashion tip the scales before the weighing has begun.

The intellectual has (or should have) an authority which is proper to him, but its use (and eventually its possession) requires a sense of responsibility and imposes upon him the obligation never to be merely silly. It was because these conditions were not fulfilled that the behaviour of intellectuals in the thirties was so damaging to intellectual influence in general, and now, with the failure to identify real problems and the Gadarene rush into emotionally attractive blind alleys, it looks as if history were repeating itself. A capacity to analyse society should imply

a capacity to analyse ourselves, but sentimental self-indulgence only produces a hypocritical humility concealing depths of moralizing arrogance. Faced with a movement such as that of nuclear disarmament, it is fairly easy, if one disagrees with it on logical grounds, to talk of the 'sincerity' of those taking part in it. It is much more difficult (and will appear ungenerous to the soft-hearted) to say that all these idealists are wrong, and wrong, in part, because they are ignorant. Yet, just as those who fail to observe the real consequences of such a movement can hardly be said to be intellectuals at all, so those who observe, disapprove and fail to condemn out of emotional squeamishness or liberal delicacy can be called nothing but poltroons, the Pavlovian dogs of intellect salivating at a slogan, a banner or a procession. Weakness of character should not be a trait inseparable from the profession of liberal principles or the calling of an intellectual, and the fact that it is hard to think of liberal intellectuals except as pleasant but ineffectual beings is the most striking testimony to a treason of the clerks which, though by no means universal, is fashionable enough to infect large sectors of our intellectual life. Personally, I have more respect for the harsh totalitarians, whose opinions I abhor, than for those 'liberals' who will always deliver the keys of any city when these are demanded of them in a sufficiently peremptory voice.

THE DUTY OF THOUGHT

The widespread failure in bold and realistic thinking which is the consequence of an abdication of their functions by so many intellectuals—those, above all, who interest themselves in social reform—would be a serious matter at any time. It is doubly serious at a moment in history when all that remains to inform our national community is the disconnected fragments of nineteenth-century humanism. 'God is dead and man is dying' is a cry that has haunted the whole of our century, bringing with it the abandonment of some of the gains slowly acquired through centuries by Christian humanism, while, at the same time, keeping and even exalting others. We live in the era of the murderous vegetarian, the sadistic animal-lover, the good family man who signs death warrants without a qualm. And the monstrous disproportion implicit in these associations of subject and adjective or predicate is evidence, if evidence were needed, of the anarchy which reigns in standards of behaviour.

In England we have felt this atomization of humanism rather less than

has been the case in some other countries, but its presence remains with us all the same. Recently ours has been a humanism of kindliness, of a reasonable charity, of a decent and decorous honesty and respect for the rights of others. It has left out of its consideration extreme qualities such as wisdom, beauty and goodness just as it has managed to avoid the more striking vices. We have designed our society for the Highest Common Factor of man, but we have neglected the utmost possibilities of the individual, and this too is a distortion.

Now, though we may be saved from decadence and impotence by a vital reaction provoked by our very inability to moulder quietly in a corner of Europe, we still cannot foresee what forms a future quickening of our national life will take. Like a patient cured from an illness, after fifteen years of constraint and crisis we shall find ourselves, if we deserve it, with new energies and new opportunities. How shall we use them? And to what ends? At the moment the political parties, through whose instrumentality the government of this country is carried on, are busy trying to adapt the ideas of the past to the problems of the present, but this praiseworthy empiricism will not suffice for ever. Sooner or later in a more dynamic society the contradictions implicit in adhering to the humanitarian ideas of a past century in a world that has largely forgotten the premises on which they were based will make itself felt, and then we shall have to consider what kind of country, what kind of continent even, we want. This rethinking of our national ideals will have to be done by intellectuals—it is not the business of politicians—and it will involve a scrutiny of problems that have hardly been posed as yet: the relationships between the individual and the modern state, between the worker and his work, between education and leisure. Liberalism (in its widest sense) has won a resounding victory over one set of inhumanities only to be assailed by another, which is all the more difficult to combat in that it ignores, rather than deliberately affronts, the individual. A new definition of humanism is needed, if man is to be given even the illusion of being in control of his own destiny rather than in the grip of social and technical forces organized on an ever greater scale. And, if intellectuals fail in their task of providing new moral direction, if they succumb to the temptation of technocratic power or merely to the inadequacy of their convictions and the strength of their neuroses, then a new definition will be made in spite of them, and it will not be that of a humanism as we have known it.

Yet there is no reason to feel depressed by this conclusion. Ideals which cannot defend themselves are not worth defending, and there would be no good cause for despair if the present leaders of intellectual fashion really were to continue to prove as bad at their job of thinking as many of them now appear to be. For there are plenty of creative minds which care nothing for fashion and are unaffected by the fads and whimsies that afflict some of those intellectuals most in the public view. There is a terrible orthodoxy of Bohemia which has the effect of reducing principles to sentimentality and ideals to cant, but, happily, it only touches a minority of what might be called intellectual performers concerned to strut and posture before an audience rather than with the modest and retired pursuit of truth. No doubt it is a condition of our salvation that we should listen to sages rather than public entertainers and to philosophers rather than *entrepreneurs*, but I feel some confidence that the antics of our present personnel cannot continue too long without attracting unfavourable attention from the great class of intellectual consumers who absorb ideas and help to spread them. Ultimately, we shall get the thought which we deserve, and I cannot think that we deserve much of what we are getting now. But I should hope that, as a country, we might also get the thought which we need. That, too, is part of the responsibility of the intellectual.

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